Serfojee Rajah. 1829

MEMOIRS

OF THE

COUNTESS DE GENLIS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

THE HISTORY OF THE

EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

115

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

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MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME DE GENLIS.

The history of my first interview with J. J. Rousseau is not very creditable either to my understanding or to my discernment, but it is altogether so singular and ludicrous, that I shall amuse even myself while I recal it to mind in the following account of my acquaintance with him.

It was about six months after Rousseau's arrival at Paris; I was then eighteen years of age, and although I had never read a single line of his works, I felt a great wish to see a man so celebrated, and who particularly interested me, as being the author of the *Devin du Village*; this delightful work, which will ever please those who admire simplicity of style and manner, is distinguished by a musical expression perfectly suited to the words, and in a degree scarcely to be met with in any subsequent work,

except the comic operas of Monsigny, and the grand operas of Gluck.* But to return to Rousseau. He was very shy and unsociable, refusing either to receive or to pay visits; and as I did not feel courage enough to take any steps to make his acquaintance, I expressed a wish to know him, without thinking it was possible to find the means of gratifying my wish. One day M. de Sauvigny, who sometimes saw Rousseau, told me in confidence, that M. de Genlis intended to play me a trick, by bringing me some evening Preville under the disguise of J. J. Rousseau, and presenting him to me as Rousseau himself. This idea made me laugh very much, and I promised to appear entirely deceived by this joke, which was called a *mystification*, a practice much in fashion at that time. I very seldom went to the play, and had only seen Preville two or three times, from boxes at a great distance from the stage. Preville possessed the art of mimickry, and of entirely altering the expression of his countenance: he was of about the same height as Rousseau, (for every one knew that

* The celebrated Rameau had already given the example of that accord so desirable, particularly in *Pygmalion*, in the air, *Fatal Amour, cruel Vanqueur*, &c. &c. The words of that song could not be better expressed, if recited, with the most perfect delivery, than they are by the music. The same thing may also be said of the words of the admirable air, *Tristes apprêts, pâles flambeaux*, in *Castor and Pollux*.—(*Note by the Author.*)

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Rousseau was short,) and M. de Genlis had really formed the plan that had been confided to me, but had forgotten it almost immediately. M. de Sauvigny had also forgotten it, and I alone recollected the circumstance.

I remained three weeks without seeing M. de Sauvigny, but at the end of that time he came and told me, with an air of marked satisfaction, in presence of M. de Genlis, that Rousseau was extremely desirous of hearing me perform on the harp, and that if I would have the kindness to play before him, he would bring him to me the next day. Believing it quite certain that I should only see Preville, I had great difficulty in replying, without losing my gravity; I however kept a tolerably demure countenance, whilst I assured him that I should certainly play as well as I could for J. J. Rousseau.

The next day I waited with impatience for the appointed hour, thinking that the metamorphosis of a *Crispin** into a philosopher, would be highly ludicrous and entertaining. I was in high spirits whilst expecting his arrival, at which M. de Genlis, who knew that I was naturally very timid, was much surprised, being unable to understand how the idea of receiving so grave a personage, could possibly

* A name given to a particular line of valets on the French stage, and to the actors who perform those characters. (*Translator.*)

produce that impression upon me, and when he observed that I laughed the moment Rousseau was announced, my behaviour appeared to him quite unaccountable.

I must confess, that nothing ever appeared to me so odd and fantastical as his figure and appearance, which I merely considered as a masquerade. His coat, his *marron*-coloured stockings, his little round wig, the whole of this costume, his manners and deportment, seemed to me a scene of comedy most ludicrous, and perfectly well acted. I however made a prodigious effort, assumed a tolerably appropriate countenance, and, after having stammered out two or three words of politeness, sat down. The conversation began, and fortunately for me in a rather lively strain; I remained silent, and now and then burst into a fit of laughter, but so naturally and so heartily, that this extraordinary display of mirth did not displease Rousseau. He said several pretty things respecting youth in general; I thought Preville witty, and that Rousseau himself would not have been so entertaining, as he would have been displeased at my laughing. Rousseau spoke to me, and as I did not feel the least embarrassed, I answered very unceremoniously the first thing that occurred to me. He thought me a very odd person, and I thought he acted with a degree of perfection which I could not sufficiently admire. Caricatures have never made me

laugh, but what delighted me in this instance was the simplicity, the natural and unaffected manner of him whom I looked upon as an actor, and who consequently appeared to me much superior in private, to what I had seen of him on the stage. I however could not help thinking that he represented Rousseau as too indulgent, goodnatured, and cheerful. I played on the harp, and sang some of the songs of the *Devin du Village*, Rousseau looking at me all the while, smiling with that kind of pleasure which is produced by genuine infantile simplicity; and in taking his departure, he promised to come again the next day to dine with us. I had been so much entertained by his company, that this promise delighted me, and I jumped for joy, and accompanied him to the door, saying all the pretty things and all the odd things imaginable. When he was out of the house, I ceased to constrain myself, and began to laugh most heartily; M. de Genlis, struck with astonishment, looked at me with an air of severity and displeasure, which redoubled my mirth. "I see very well," said I, "that you acknowledge at last that you have not deceived me, and you are piqued; but indeed how could you suppose that I should be simple enough to take Preville for J. J. Rousseau."—"Preville!"—"Yes; it is in vain to attempt to deny it, I shall not believe you."—"Are you mad?"—"I confess that Preville has been most entertaining, and has

acted most naturally, and without exaggeration; in short, that nothing could be better as a performance but I am persuaded, that with the exception of the dress, he has not imitated Rousseau. He has personified a good old man very amiable, and not Rousseau, who would certainly have thought my conduct very strange, and would have been seriously offended at such a reception." I had no sooner pronounced these words, than M. de Genlis and M. de Sauvigny began to laugh so immoderately, that I began to feel surprised; an explanation ensued, and to my great confusion I heard that it was certainly J. J. Rousseau I had received in that singular manner. I declared that I would never receive him again if he were to be informed of my stupidity, and was promised that he should never know what had occurred: a promise which was strictly kept.

The most singular circumstance in all this is, that by this conduct, silly and inconsiderate as it was, I gained the good opinion of Rousseau. He told M. de Sauvigny, that I was a young person the most unaffected, cheerful, and devoid of pretensions he had ever met with, whereas but for the mistake which had inspired me with so much confidence and good humour, he would have seen nothing in me but excessive timidity. I therefore owed this success to an error, and could not possibly feel the least proud at it. Knowing all the indulgence of Rousseau, I met

him again without any feeling of embarrassment, and have always been perfectly at my ease with him.

I never knew a literary character more agreeable or with less affectation. He spoke simply of himself, and without spite of his enemies. He rendered full justice to the talents of M. de Voltaire. He even said that the author of *Zaire* and *Merope* could not be without a soul full of sensibility; but he added, that he had been corrupted by pride and flattery. He spoke to us of his *Confessions*, which he had read to Madame d'Egmont. I was too young, he told me, to obtain the same proof of confidence. While on this subject, he thought fit to ask me if I had read his works; I replied, with some embarrassment, that I had not. I was still more confused, when he wished to know why, and looked fixedly at me. His eyes were small, and though deep set, were very piercing, and as if they would penetrate and pry into the very soul of the individual he was interrogating. It seemed to me that he would have instantly discovered a falsehood or evasive reply; I therefore had no merit in frankly telling him that I had not read his works, because it was said, that there were many things in them against religion. "You know," replied he, "that I am not a catholic; but no one has spoken of the Gospel with more *conviction* and feeling." These were his very words. I thought he had done with his questions; but he asked me again

with a smile, why I blushed in telling him what I have related above. I at once answered, that I was afraid of displeasing him. He highly praised my reply, because it was unpretending. He liked above all things simplicity and unaffectedness. He told me that his works were not suited to my time of life; but that I would do well to read *Emile* in a few years. He often talked to us of the manner in which he had composed the *Nouvelle Heloïse.* He told us that he wrote all the letters of *Julie* on beautiful small letter-paper with vignettes—that he afterwards folded them like letters, and read them in his walks with as much transport as if he had received them from an adored mistress. He recited his *Pygmalion* to us by heart, making a few gestures, the whole, as I thought, in the most energetic, true, and perfect manner. He had a most agreeable smile, full of mildness and *finesse,* was talkative, and, as far as I found, very gay. He talked admirably of music, and was a real connoisseur; yet, amidst the heap of *romances* of his own that he gave me, there was not one that was pretty, or even fit for singing. He made a very bad air for the romance of *Nice de Metastase,* which one of my friends, M. de Monsigny, has since set to music for me; the air is now worthy of the words, which are really charming.

He gave me all his romances with the music; the whole together would have formed a very precious

volume, for it was all in his own handwriting, and of his own composition, words and music. But the mania of *recollections* did not prevail then as it does now; his friends were not forgotten, and little importance was given to what may be called his acquaintances, even the most celebrated of them: I scattered and lost this collection, which was neither bound nor stitched together, and I have often regretted it since. Rousseau copied music with singular perfection; I was extremely sorry when he told me that this was his sole means of subsistence.*

* The Marchioness of Pompadour having succeeded in putting Voltaire, Duclos, Crebillon, and Marmontel in her interests, tried, as she said, to *tame* Rousseau; but a letter she received from him disgusted her from making any more advances. "He is an owl," said she one day to Madame de Mirepoix: "Yes;" said the Maréchale, "but he is Minerva's."

"Madam,

"I thought for a moment that it was by mistake that your messenger wished to pay me a hundred louis, for what is only worth twelve francs, but as he has undeceived me, allow me to undeceive you in my turn. My savings have enabled me to obtain a vested income of five hundred and forty livres, after all deductions. My labour obtains me nearly the same sum, so that I have a considerable surplus, which I employ in the best way I can, though I seldom give alms. If, contrary to my expectation, old age or infirmities should one day disable me, I have a friend.

J. J. Rousseau."

Paris, August 18, 1762.

(Editor.)

Rousseau came almost daily to dine at our house, and during five months I had neither noticed caprice in him nor morbid sensibility, when we had nearly quarrelled on a very singular account. He was very fond of a kind of Sillery wine, of the colour of onion skin, and M. de Genlis asked the liberty of sending him some, adding, that he had received it himself as a present from his uncle. Rousseau answered that he would be very happy if he sent him two bottles of it The next morning M. de Genlis sent to him a basket containing twenty-five bottles of the wine, which so inflamed Rousseau, that he sent back the basket with all its contents, along with a most singular laconic epistle, breathing nothing but anger, disdain, and implacable resentment. M. de Sauvigny completed our astonishment and consternation by telling us that Rousseau was absolutely furious, and declaring that he never would see us again. Wondering how so simple an attention could have given such offence, M. de Genlis asked M. de Sauvigny the reason Rousseau gave for his caprice; he replied, that Rousseau said it was evident they thought that he had modestly asked for two bottles, only to have a present; that the idea was offensive, &c. M. de Genlis told me, that as I was not involved in his *impertinence*, Rousseau might perhaps consent to return in favour of my innocence. Our regrets were sincere, for we loved him. I therefore wrote a

rather long letter, which I sent along with two bottles, in my name. Rousseau yielded at last and returned, but though very agreeable with me, he was dry and distant towards M. de Genlis, whose talents and conversation he had hitherto been fond of, and M. de Genlis was never wholly reinstated in his good graces.

Two months after M. de Sauvigny had a play to be performed at the *Theatre Français*, entitled the *Persiffleur*. Rousseau had told us that he did not frequent the theatre, and that he carefully avoided showing himself in public; but as he seemed very fond of M. de Sauvigny, I urged him to go along with us on the first night of the play, and he consented, as I had obtained the loan of a grated box, with a private staircase and entrance. It was agreed that I was to take him to the theatre, and that if the play succeeded, we should leave the house before the afterpiece, and return to our house to supper. The plan rather deranged the usual habits of Rousseau, but he yielded to the arrangement with all the ease in the world. The night of the play, Rousseau came to me a little before five o'clock, and we set out. When we were in the carriage, Rousseau told me, with a smile, that I was very richly dressed to remain in a grated box. I answered, with the same good humour, that I had dressed myself for him. Now I had flowers in my hair, and my head-dress

was in the usual fashion of young ladies, but every thing else was as simple as could be;—I mention these particulars on account of the importance given to them in the sequel. We reached the theatre more than half an hour before the play began. On entering the box, I began to put down the grate, but Rousseau was strongly opposed to it, saying that he was sure I should not like it. I told him that the contrary was the fact, and that we had agreed upon it besides. He answered that he would place himself behind me, that I should conceal him altogether, which was all he wished for. I still insisted, but Rousseau held the grate strongly, and prevented me putting it down. During this little discussion we were standing; and the box was a front one near the orchestra, and adjoining the pit. I was afraid of drawing the attention of the audience towards us; to put an end to the dispute, I yielded and sat down. Rousseau placed himself behind me, but a moment afterwards put forward his head betwixt M. de Genlis and me, so as to be seen. I told him of it. He twice made the same movement again, and was perceived and known. I heard several persons, looking towards our box, and calling out, "*There is Rousseau!*" "My God," said I, "you have been seen!" He answered me drily, "that cannot be." Yet the words "*There is Rousseau! There is Rousseau!*" passed from one to another, and all eyes were fixed

on our box, but nothing further was done. The noise disappeared without producing any applause. The orchestra began, nothing was thought of but the play, and Rousseau was forgotten. I had again proposed to him to put down the grate, when he answered me, in a very peevish tone, that it was too late. "That's not my fault," said I. "No, surely," he replied, with a forced and bitter smile. I was much hurt at this answer, it was so unjust. I was in great confusion, and notwithstanding my want of experience, I saw pretty clearly how the truth lay. I flattered myself, however, that this strange peevishness would quickly disappear, and I saw that the best thing I could do was to seem not to observe it. The curtain rose, and the play began. I thought of nothing but the new play, which succeeded. The author was several times called for, and his success was complete.

We left the box. Rousseau gave me his hand; but his face was frightfully sombre. I told him the author must be well pleased, and that we should have a delightful evening. Not a word in reply. On reaching my carriage I mounted; M. de Genlis came after Rousseau to let him pass first, but the latter, turning round, told him he should not return with us. M. de Genlis and I protested against this; but Rousseau, without replying a word, made his bow, turned his back, and disappeared.

The next day M. de Sauvigny was commissioned to question him about this freak, but was strangely surprised at his asserting, with eyes sparkling with rage, that he would never see me as long as he lived, for that I had taken him to the play to show him off in the way that wild beasts are exhibited at the fair. M. de Sauvigny answered, that from what he had heard me say the evening before, I had been desirous of putting the grate down. Rousseau maintained that I had made a very feeble effort, and that at any rate, my splendid dress and the choice of the box were proofs sufficient that I never had the intention of concealing myself. It was useless to tell him that my dress was nowise remarkable, and that a borrowed box could not be one of choice:—nothing could bend him. I was so hurt at this account of his conduct, that I would not take the slightest step to pacify one who had acted so unjustly. Besides this, I knew that there was no sincerity in his complaints; the fact is, that with the hope of producing a lively sensation, he desired to show himself, and his ill-humour was excited by not finding his presence produce more effect. I never saw him afterwards. Two or three years afterwards, learning, by Mademoiselle Thouin, of the King's Garden, (the *Jardin des Plantes,)* whose brother he saw frequently, that he was sorry that tickets were necessary to obtain admission into the gardens of Mouceaux, which he was

very fond of, I obtained a key of the garden for him, with the liberty of walking in it whenever he pleased; and I sent the key by Mademoiselle Thouin. He returned me thanks; nothing more occurred, and I was pleased at doing him a service, but felt no desire for further intimacy.

The same year M. de Sauvigny brought forward his tragedy, or rather his drama of *Gabrielle d'Estrée*, which contains some fine verses and eloquent passages, and some interesting scenes—it was successful. The author possessed talent, and a very sound judgment in general; but he never had any plan, and never produced a perfect dramatic work.

Knowledge now began to be regularly classified in my mind. I was well acquainted with Ancient History, Roman History, that of the Lower Empire, and Mythology. I had read all our dramatic authors, all our good poets, and all our moralists, at whose head I place our Christian orators. This winter I read Bourdaloue and Flechier: the former I found solid, and consequently convincing, and this is high praise for a preacher. Flechier seemed to me full of brilliancy and wit, but rather affected, and I am still of the same opinion at present. With delight I again read La Bruyere, and began the History of France, of which I was very ignorant. Towards the middle of winter the Count de Guines set out on his embassy to Berlin. My aunt was still sick from chagrin; she

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tormented the Duke of Orleans, who had become her confidant; and alarmed him to the highest pitch by declaring that she would go to Barege by the end of March. M. de Montesson was dying, and every thing announced a happy course of events.

M. de La Harpe was now reading his *Melanie*, which charmed all the young ladies; but I took no step to be present at his recitations. These readings I never liked, particularly those of works much boasted of, for I was always confused in my demeanour; I am not very forward, and one must be excessively so on such occasions not to look like an ideot. Madame d'Henin, and many others, quoted some verses from it, with high admiration; amongst others, the following towards the end, when her vows have just been pronounced :—

"La tombe se renferme et l'on y meurt long tems."

This verse I found bad for the very reason that made it be admired. We never say of any one that he is long in dying *(meurt long tems)*; and in fact a false expression was taken for a new idea. How many authors have since owed all their success to this mistake. We say a long agony, but not a long death, *(une longue mort,)* for death is but momentary. Yet *on y meurt long tems*, was, notwithstanding, held to be a striking mark of genius.

Melanie was printed; I read it, and found it but a

bourgeoise imitation of *Iphigenie.* A father wishes to sacrifice his daughter, and a mother and a lover oppose it. But what kind of mother is Madame de Faublas, with so many infallible means of preventing the sacrifice! The *Curé* is taken from the *Comte de Cominge,* a wretched piece written prior to *Melanie,* and he only appears to talk to no purpose. He should act, and then there would be no victim; the *denouement* is quite insufferable in a play, the characters of which are Christian; but at that time the author was neither religious nor a Christian. *The feeling* Melanie, abjuring religion, and delivering up her father, whom she *curses,* to eternal remorse, and her mother and lover to eternal sorrow, is altogether a monstrous character. Suicide is still more odious in a woman than in a man;—a woman who thinks of killing herself is no longer a woman. M. de La Harpe, in the preface to this play, had the courage and simplicity to say, that Voltaire wrote him that *Europe was expecting Melanie!* Such was really the style of Voltaire towards his admirers; and whilst he called Gresset *a scoundrel,* and the author of *Didon* and some beautiful poetry, a *fool,* he wrote that *Europe was expecting Melanie!* Europe, which had never shown this ardent feeling for *Cinna,* for *Athalié,* or for the *Misanthrope,* must have been strangely duped when *Melanie* at last appeared. Since his conversion, M. de La Harpe has reprinted this drama.

It is worth while to examine the verses he has expunged—as he was really sincere in his devotion, he conscientiously put out every verse he had written with a bad intention; and amongst them, there are many written in a very sentimental and religious style. Nothing shows better philosophical duplicity than an examination of these corrections. At this time Collé brought out his *Joueur*, (Beverley,) a drama as tiresome as it is sombre; it was first played at Villers-Coterets. I believe it was this winter also that Monsigny gave his *Deserteur*, the music of which will always be delightful to those who truly love that enchanting art. The drama is full of the wildest improbabilities, but it presents some moving incidents and interesting scenes. I was present on the first night of its being performed, and I confess that I shed torrents of tears; it is true that never was a play better performed. Caillot, Laruette, his wife, Clairval, Trial, as clown, the charming Mademoiselle Beaupré, playing the character of the young girl, were all excellent performers, that have never been equalled since. The words of the finest airs were often ridiculous enough, like the following:—

"Mourir n'est rien, c'est notre derniere heure."

'Tis our last hour—a fine motive of consolation truly —while *death* is really *something*, *because* it is *our last hour*. Sedaine has written hundreds of verses of

the same stamp, and when he wishes to be moral, is altogether *unique*—witness one of his maxims, the truth of which is so simple and incontestible :—

> " Les peres seroient trop heureux
> Si le ciel comblait tous leurs vœux."

But the music of Montigny does not allow one the smallest opportunity of attending to this whimsical poetry. Madame de Montessoǹ took me several times to sup with the Duchess of Mazarin, the most unfortunate lady in beauty, in attempts at splendour and festivals, that was ever seen. She was by far too fat to be agreeable; but she was very handsome, and had a brilliant complexion; her colour was thought to be too high, and the Maréchale de Luxembourg said that her freshness was not that of the rose, but the freshness of butcher's meat. The *saying* was cruel, but it took effect, and freshness was thenceforth dishonoured.

It was said that the fairy *Guignon Guignolant* presided at the birth of the Duchess of Mazarin. In fact, she was very fair and very handsome, and yet she pleased no one. She had splendid diamonds, and when she wore them she was said to be like *a lustre.* Her suppers were the best in Paris, yet they were ridiculed, because the dishes were somewhat disguised. She was polite and obliging, and was said to be of a bad disposition. She was witty, and many

of her *bon mots* were repeated, and yet she was constantly doing and saying the most ill-timed things in the world. Her pride was great, and she was reckoned to be avaricious; she gave the most splendid fêtes, and something ridiculous always happened in them: in a word, complete success in any one thing she never could obtain. One day during winter, she conceived the idea of giving a *fête champêtre* at her splendid mansion in Paris. She assembled an immense crowd in her *salon,* then just *decoré,* and dazzling with mirrors, which covered the walls of the apartment from the ceiling to the floor. At the extremity of the *salon* was a cabinet full of leaves and flowers, and on opening a gate a transparency was to appear, showing a real flock of sheep, very white and well washed, defiling in the woodland, and led by a shepherdess, a dancer from the Opera. Whilst this ingenious scene was preparing, and the company were dancing in the *salon,* the imprisoned sheep escaped, it is not known how, and without dog or shepherdess suddenly burst into the *salon,* dispersed the dancers, and began butting their heads against the mirrors: the leaps and bleatings of the frightened flock, the noise they made in breaking the mirrors to pieces, the cries and flight of the women, the roars of laughter from the dancers, formed a much more amusing scene than that of the pastoral, which the company lost by this accident. For my part, I found her a very good

kind of woman, for she was fat and given to laughter; and according to this way of judging (which I still preserve) Madame d'Husson, the sister-in-law of M. de Donézan, seemed to me the best lady in the world, and assuredly I was much mistaken in thinking so. Madame d'Husson was then at least forty years old, was handsome, and always presented a fair conduct and an irreproachable character, though the reverse is stated in a libellous publication that was once popular, the *Courier de l'Europe*. Madame d'Husson had a look of the most perfect simplicity; yet I believe there never existed a person more given to evil speaking, not from malicious intent, but merely to supply topics of conversation, to form the subject of a good tale, to amuse others by ridicule, or to interest strangers by scandal. Amongst the company she saw, she tried only to discover their faults; if they had none, she declared them to be insipid, were they the cleverest people in the world. In other respects, she was obliging, kind, good humoured, and very lively in conversation. Yet it is not less true, that nobody ever spread abroad so many malignant anecdotes, or repeated so many injurious stories. Madame de Sevigné, with her usual grace, says in her letters, that she has *always laughed* at what is called *bons fonds* (good sort of persons) to excuse those who raise up false and malicious reports. She is very right, if it be possible to be constantly ridi-

culing others and backbiting without malice, at any rate, the individual must be totally devoid of reflection and common feeling. Madame d'Husson was witty and agreeable, and preferred this odious means of pleasing, or rather of amusing others, for she had more worthy objects of ambition at her choice—but what was the result? With a perfectly correct personal conduct, with beauty, accomplishments, and a handsome fortune, Madame d'Husson was not esteemed; she had many enemies, and was entirely forgotten in her old age, without ever having been the object of affection.

I cannot reproach myself with ever having repeated or said a word which hurt the reputation of those I esteemed the least, nor with acting like so many others, in spreading epigrams and satirical verses; in society I have invariably shown the highest contempt for such subjects, and great unbelief respecting tales of scandal. My aunt always gave me this good example, and assisted in strengthening my aversion to an opposite line of conduct. She was nowise given to evil speaking. She told me (and the thought was full of wisdom) that independent of all principle, *evil speaking always spoils the manners of a woman*. The saying merits being preserved. I am indebted to my aunt for an excellent rule of conduct, and I shall mention it here. A short time after my first appearance in society, while speaking of con-

fidential communications, (*mes petites confidences,*) she told me, that a lady desirous of taking away all hope from a man in love with her, should never write to him; that in a case of this kind, the harshest letter is always a false step, and often an act of high imprudence. On this subject she gave me very delicate, just, and sensible advice. These are the only directions she gave me—she ought to have given me others, more useful, for I would have followed them! but she did not! . . .

Not to appear better than I am, I must admit that I have often been given to ridicule others, but I have never ridiculed any thing but arrogance, folly, and pedantry. I was never in my life tempted to laugh at ignorance or awkwardness; on the contrary, when I saw these failings in others, I always felt for them.

During this winter, I several times went with Madame de Puisieux into a variety of companies, amongst others, into that at the house of the Countess de Brione, who still retained proofs of her renowned beauty; she had the figure of Minerva, which perhaps might be admired, but which never could have been agreeable.

Madame de Brione was highly accomplished, with manners full of dignity and mildness. The most remarkable person in the society of Madame de Puisieux and the Marechale d'Estrée, was the Duc d'Harcourt, brother of the Marquis de Beuvron; he

was talented, worthy, and good-natured. He was the only man that I ever knew, who, after obtaining the greatest success with women, still preserved the utmost simplicity in his manners and conversation. I likewise frequently supped with Prince Louis de Rohan, afterwards the too famous Cardinal de Rohan; though not a very useful clergyman, he was very handsome, and was gay, and graceful in his manners; his conversation was amusing, but so full of frivolity and thoughtlessness, that it was extremely difficult to judge of the qualities of his mind. All that we knew of it was this, that no one endowed with small judgment, could have more agreeable manners.

I every where met with the *younger* Madame de Segur, so called, to distinguish her from her mother-in-law. Madame de Segur was then two or three and thirty years of age; her face was not pretty, but her teeth were very fine; her look mild, her shape charming, and there was great elegance in her carriage and in her dress. Sweetness and goodnature were the chief features in her disposition; she was universally beloved, and deserved to be so. Her husband, M. de Segur, (afterwards a minister of state and a marshal of France,) who had lost an arm at the battle of Minden, was one of the best of men, and most excellent company; he was fond of me from my childhood, often gave me useful advice, and when he was minister, immediately granted my

mother the pension which I asked for her as widow of a lieutenant-general of the king's armies—her second husband, the Baron d'Andlau. The memory of M. de Segur will always be dear to me. His mother, a natural daughter of the regent, (Duke of Orleans,) was at that time very aged, but possessed charming wit and gaiety, was very fond of young ladies, and was beloved by them for her lively and amusing conversation.

Though I am naturally inclined to think well of others, and am of a good-natured disposition, yet there were two persons in society at that time for whom I felt a decided antipathy. One was the Comte de Coigny, brother of the duke and chevalier of that name: he followed me wherever I went, and the more I saw him, I detested him more and more. His face might be reckoned handsome, if any face can be so with wide nostrils, and an ill-natured look; his eyes were fixed, inquisitive, and prying—such a look I have always detested. A look that seems to pry into your soul, naturally excites fear and distrust, even when you haveno thing to conceal. The Comte de Coigny had what is called a fine *carnation*, (complexion,) and his healthy colour, along with the roughness of his look, gave him, in my eyes, the appearance of a man who blushes from rage. He was not deficient in wit, but it was well suited to his disposition, dry, satirical, and severe. The Comte de

Coigny became my enemy, and I gained this advantage at least, that I met him much less frequently. The other person whose disposition was repulsive to me, was Madame de Cambis, the sister of the Prince de Chimay and Madame de Caraman; she was four or five and thirty years of age, and full of affectation. She was strongly marked with the smallpox, her features were common, her height good, with the most disdainful and impertinent carriage, that any one ever dared to assume in society. Her friends said that she was very witty, and that she made the most ingenious *bon mots*. One of them was the following: some body praising my liveliness in her presence, she replied, "Yes, a gaiety of pretty teeth;" (*une gaieté de jolies dents*;) as much as to say, that I laughed only to show my teeth, a supposition highly unjust, for I never had the slightest affectation, and that was one of the most disagreeable any one could have. Madame de Cambis wrote, it is said, very pretty verses; but I never knew any thing of her composition, except two verses she made on my aunt and the Duc de Guines, and they were very ill-natured, very insipid, badly rhymed, and badly expressed.

I became acquainted with a lady very remarkable for her talents and charming disposition, the Countess de la Marck, sister of the Duke of Noailles; she was old and religious, but never did piety appear in a

more lovely form. At her house, I saw the beautiful Madame de Newkerque, afterwards Madame de Champcenetz;* her beauty was on the wane, but she was still charming. It might be said of her what Madame de Sevigné said of Madame Dufresnoy, the mistress of M. de Louvois, "that she was concentrated in her beauty" (*toute recueillie dans sa beauté*). It was too evident, that she thought of nothing but showing her little feet, her pretty hands, and of attitudinizing—if she had possessed particularly handsome teeth, she would have had the gaiety *des jolies dents*. There were some very handsome women at court at this time; amongst others, the Viscountess de Laval, and the Countess Jules, afterwards Duchess of Polignac. The shape of the latter was bad, straight but small, without elegance or delicacy; her face would have been faultless, had her forehead been good, but it was large, ill-shaped, and rather dark, though the rest of her face was very fair. When the fashion came in of letting the hair fall down over the forehead, almost as low as the eye-

* Madame de Newkerque, so long famous for her beauty, was first known by the name of Madame Pater; she was near marrying M. de Lambesc, who was much younger than her, and finally gave her hand to the Marquis de Champcenetz. It is said that she had such an intimate connexion with Louis XV. in the latter years of his reign, that she at one time enjoyed the hope of playing the same part as Madame de Maintenon did at the court of Louis XIV.

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brows, her face was really enchanting; there was such a pleasing frankness as well as humour in her expression, and her look and smile were altogether angelic. The portraits of her which are extant, are very ugly, and give not the slightest idea of her charming face. She was of a sweet and good-natured disposition, of simple, and consequently agreeable manners, and the favour she enjoyed afterwards never in the least altered her demeanour. She was said to be without talent; in the intercourse of society I found her neither silly nor incapable.*

The Princess of Monaco was then thirty-two years of age; she still looked handsome, principally from her fine complexion; but her face was too wide, and her features heavy. One of the finest young ladies of the time was Madame de Marigny, the wife of the brother of the favourite, Madame de Pompadour. She was introduced into society under the auspices of Madame de Serrant, whose husband had been governor of the pages of the Duke of Orleans. There was a rough expression in her face, and something common in her shape, as well as in her whole

* Madame de Polignac, governess of the children of France, died in Russia towards the end of 1793, at the age of forty-four. The unfortunate Marie Antoinette paid her the most affecting eulogium, by saying, *When alone with her, I am no longer queen; I am myself.*—(*Editor.*)

person; her language was also vulgar and affected; yet she was a woman of talent.

I believe it was this year that the King of Denmark visited France.* I went to almost all the fêtes

* Madame de Mazarin gave him a fête, in which her never-failing ill luck attended her. It was known that the king had loudly praised the performance of Carlin, of the Italian Opera, and the finest harlequin ever seen; and Madame de Mazarin thought of having a play, from the Italian theatre, performed at her house, which the king was unacquainted with. The name of the play was, *Arlequin barbier, paralytique.* The day of the fête, after a fine concert, the duchess led the king into the hall, where a fine theatre had been constructed. The king placed Madame de Mazarin beside him, and the play began. The king knew French but very imperfectly; and at the festivals given in honour of him hitherto, all the dramatic performances had commenced with prologues written in his praise, and in which the allusions were strongly applauded. He took the play of *Arlequin barbier, paralytique,* for one of those prologues, and at every mark of applause, excited by the performance of Carlin, he bowed low, and in the most modest and grateful manner, returned thanks to Madame de Mazarin for her attentions, saying over and over again, that she was *too good,* that he was *confused* by her kindness, that he did not merit such delicate praise, &c. The embarrassment of the duchess was inexpressible, and she knew not what to answer, as she dared not undeceive him; she was completely wretched during the whole performance. Her troubles were not ended with the play, for the king, after his return to the drawing-room, again returned her thanks, in the presence of all, and expatiated fully on the wit and grace of *the allusions,* and on the kindly disposition of the spectators, who had so loudly applauded them.—*(Note by the Author.)*

that were given to him, and these were of the most magnificent kind. All the ladies were covered with diamonds; those who had none borrowed them, or hired them from the jewellers. I never saw so many diamonds at one time, particularly at the fête given by the Duc de Villars, and at that of the Palais Royal. At the latter, there were more than twenty ladies whose dresses were trimmed with them. A singular incident relating to this happened to Madame de Berchini. She had a great many diamonds, all borrowed, and amongst the rest, an enormous quantity of *chatons*, large and small. These were diamonds set close to each other, but so detached as to be threaded in the setting under them; they were then put as a border to ribbons, or formed into necklaces with double rows. In her way to the supper-room, amidst a crowd of ladies, Madame de Berchini did her best to restrain an unlucky fit of sneezing, with which she was attacked; she burst her necklace, and though she caught a few of the *chatons*, the greater part fell on the floor, and were swept along by the majestic trains of the dresses and dominos. It was impossible to stop for a moment to pick up the scattered diamonds; she was obliged to follow the procession, at the head of which were the King of Denmark and the Duke of Orleans. Poor Madame de Berchini, whose fortune was very small, was wretched at the thought of having to buy diamonds

instead of those she had lost; and her misfortune became the subject of conversation during supper. The Duke of Orleans gave orders that a search should be made for the diamonds; and five or six were brought, but the greater part were missing. The duke promised that early next morning a very careful search should be made; but Madame de Berchini had no hopes from the measure, and went away cursing the ball, and all that belonged to it. When she rose next morning, one of the domestics of the Palais Royal brought her all the *chatons* found in the gallery, the three anti-chambers, and the dining-room; and she found not only all she lost, but seven small *chatons* besides, that other ladies had lost, and that were never claimed, though for more than eight days she related this generous restitution to every one she met.

I had now taken my eldest daughter from nurse, and kept her at home; she delighted me by her beauty, sweetness, and charming ways. I went daily to see her asleep in her cradle. There I enjoyed the sweetest meditations I ever made in my life, and formed the most beautiful pictures of imagination; of these she was always the heroine. How many thoughts one has lost at the end of a long life, a thousand times more worthy of preservation than those that have been committed to writing! How cold are the ideas calmly formed, compared to those

inspired by the heart alone! Eloquence is only fitted to make others enjoy our thoughts and feelings; but it is an art, and the application it requires always cools down all that we experience. In a long reverie, caused by a profound and legitimate fèeling, the heart only acts; we are inspired solely by that divine aspiration, that will never die; we are animated solely by a portion of the supreme intelligence; within ourselves, the notion of the language of men is gradually effaced, and finally disappears—all our thoughts are changed into vivid images and deep-felt emotions—and to reduce them into words and sentences, they must be transformed,—and how many are there which it would be impossible to find terms to express!—Do the blessed converse in heaven? I cannot think it. There all is infinite, every feeling is unbounded; the praises of the Eternal are only the perfect agreement of the divine and supreme harmony; that of terrestrial music is formed of three sounds given by nature; (each sonorous sound contains them;) that of heaven is formed by three sentiments, which are mingled and confounded, and, like the Trinity, form but one—*love, gratitude,* and *admiration,* carried to an extreme pitch, of which our most ardent enthusiasm can form no idea. That is the celestial concord—it is all expressive. That is the immortal language of the angels, and of the elect; that is the mark of happiness for eternity!

——Here I am far removed from the earth;—but I write these memoirs rapidly and carelessly, just as the ideas rise in my imagination; in reading them it must not be forgotten that this is not a literary work.

At the end of winter my grandmother died; not only did she not leave me a single token of remembrance in her will, but she carried to the tomb the just rights of my mother. M. de Montesson died a short time afterwards. He was of the most extraordinary size ever seen. He always seemed to me a very good kind of man, though my aunt amused us by relating innumerable instances of his avaricious disposition, amongst the rest, that at her fête, and on New Year's Day, his only gallantry consisted in giving her a quarter's pin-money in advance. In other respects he kept an excellent house, and was not troublesome in it, for he only appeared at meals, scarcely ever spoke, and withdrew immediately afterwards. He gave my aunt four horses, of which she had the sole disposal, and he left her the most full and perfect liberty. He was seventy-eight years of age, with eighty thousand livres a year, when my aunt, in her nineteenth year, preferred him to every other man. During his illness, which lasted eight days, my aunt paid him the utmost attention, but it was all fruitless; he was ninety years of age, and quietly but religiously breathed his last. I did not

leave my aunt during the whole of this time, and the three last days I slept in her bed. During these eight days I saw a lady who really was not of this earth, but who, from her earliest infancy, had elevated herself to heaven; this was the sister of M. de Montesson. She was then seventy-two years of age, and must have been very beautiful, for she was still handsome, with delicate features, and a most wonderfully fair complexion for her age. She never wished to marry; by a sublime vocation, she had, at the age of twelve years, consecrated all her possessions to the poor; when she became of age, she had thirty-six thousand francs a year, and of this she reserved twelve hundred for herself, and gave away all the rest. She had only two rooms to live in, on the third floor, and kept only a servant girl; she never went out but to go to church, to visit the unfortunate, prisoners, or the sick. She was commonly on foot, or, if it rained, took a chair. As she never paid visits, I only knew her by reputation, but my aunt had mentioned her to me a thousand times with high veneration. During the eight days of her brother's illness, she passed all her time with us, and I was never weary in regarding her. She was highly agreeable, and I saw something tender in her look and manners; she found that I loved her, (for can we highly revere without affection?) and was greatly affected; she pressed my hand, I kissed her's—I

would have kissed her feet. When I asked her one day, why she had not become a nun, she replied,—*Because I am fond of prisons;* this answer made me smile, and filled me with admiration. I saw that she had preserved her freedom, for the purpose of consoling those who were deprived of it, or to procure their liberation. Every pious soul has its peculiar vocation; it is a celestial inspiration, which no individual, no government should oppose.

The night before the death of M. de Montesson, he seemed so calm, that my aunt and I went to bed at ten o'clock, as we had been up all the preceding night; we left along with him a priest, his nurse, and M. de Genlis, who perceived that he had not many hours to live. Being greatly fatigued, my aunt fell asleep the moment she got into bed. A sort of terror kept me awake; we were directly over the dying man's room, and every noise I heard made me tremble; I now and then crossed my hand over my aunt's face, and asked her if she were asleep, which she thought very teasing. At last, at a quarter to one o'clock, I heard a great noise in the house, the room door opens, and we see M. de Genlis appear, who at once informs my aunt, that *she is a widow.* He at the same time gives her notice, that the heirs, aware that M. de Montesson would not survive that night, had placed lawyers in waiting round the house, who had already learned his decease, and were about to

seal up every thing—that in fact they were now in the dead man's apartment. M. de Genlis requested my aunt to rise immediately, but told me to remain in bed, as the legal forms would not take up much time; my aunt rose in haste, put on a gown, while I remained in bed, only opening the curtains a little to see what was going on. The *commissaire,* in a large black robe, enters the room with two or three men, and puts on the seals; at the very moment they were concluding, my aunt and M. de Genlis went into another apartment, and I began to be a little troubled with the fear of being left alone in this vast chamber; but when the assistants of the *commissaire* suddenly leave it, and the *commissaire* himself is about to follow, I become desperately afraid, jump out of bed, lay hold of his robe, and scream out *Monsieur le Commissaire, do not abandon me!* In a moment I was confounded at being in my shift, but I instantly folded myself in the long train of the *commissaire,* who had not observed me till now, and was terribly afraid; he thought I was a mad woman, and he had cause to think so. M. de Genlis, my aunt, and every one in the house hastened towards the room, and on seeing my singular plight, burst into a loud fit of laughter—never were things sealed up so gaily. I put on my dress while wrapped up in the cloak of the *commissaire,* for I would not come out of it till I got a petticoat and gown. Some time afterwards,

M. de Thiars made a very pretty song about this adventure.

We set out for Vincennes, where we spent ten days with my grand-aunt, Mademoiselle Dessaleux, who, after my grandmother's death, had obtained large and magnificent apartments in the castle. The Duke of Orleans came to Vincennes to see my aunt, but I perceived a slight shade of coolness in his manner, which evidently did not escape her notice. I believe that he was afraid of her schemes after the death of M. de Montesson, and she herself was convinced that some one had warned him to beware of her ambitious views. As she had nobody here with whom she could talk of her conjectures, she at last made me her confident, but, in her usual way, trying to deceive me as to a thousand circumstances. Since I had read *Marianne* I perfectly knew her mind, and was nowise her dupe. When once we have the key of factitious characters, with very little talent we can find out their views more easily than those of others, for with them every thing is a matter of calculation : to ascertain their intentions, we have only to think of the interests that occupy their minds. My aunt assured me that she was totally devoid of ambition, and was anxious for nothing but quiet and independence ; that being young, possessed of an agreeable rank in society, and of forty thousand livres a year, were she, with *her disposition,* to commit the folly of marrying

again, all the sacrifices would be on her side, and she would never make such enormous sacrifices but to a very strong passion, or to snatch from the depths of despair an honourable man, whose previous constancy she had perfectly experienced. Such was exactly her language. From all her rambling talk, I could only obtain the assurance that she was firmly resolved to try every thing and to execute every thing in her power for the purpose of marrying the Duke of Orleans. She spoke with great spite of the embarrassed air he had shown; "I am sure," said she, "that some one at the Palais Royal is trying to keep him from me—I suspect Madame de Barbantane and M. de Pont (she was not mistaken)—I am supposed to have plans which I am incapable of forming. All these people would have been delighted at seeing me his mistress, that was better than *Marquise;* but they cannot bear the idea of seeing me at an elevation that would put them all in my dependence—yet they witnessed the frankness of my conduct towards the Duke of Orleans, and that I did not conceal from him *my sentiment* for the Duc de Guines,*—if that has not cured him, it is not my fault. Finally, I will prove that I have no designs on him—I will give him up to his own management—I am going to Barrège."

* Because it was impossible to deny it, the thing was so universally known.—*(Note of the Author.)*

In thus forming her resolution, my aunt imagined that the Duke of Orleans could not bear her absence, that the trial would teach him that he could not do without her; and that, finally, she could say on her return, that she was altogether cured of her unfortunate passion. In all this scheming, my aunt ran much greater risks than she imagined; and in the result she was more fortunate than skilful. Nothing could be more ridiculous than the way in which she talked to me of the whole of this business. With any other confident she would have employed infinitely more cunning, but to me she spoke nearly as openly as if she had been alone, with the exception of two or three phrases declarative of her being without schemes or ambition. In other respects, she showed me all her ill-will against the persons she imagined opposed to her views; and did not take the trouble of concealing her anxiety and agitation. She did not find me devoid of sense; but without reflecting that I had been married at seventeen, and was now twenty-two, she saw nothing in me but my childish liveliness of mind, my simplicity in several ways, my appearance, that was more girlish than my age, my timidity in high circles, my wild gaiety when at my ease, my fear of ghosts—in a word, she considered me only as a pretty child, an Agnès a little altered in manners by intercourse with society. As she never read herself, she asked me no questions about my studies,

and I never said a word to her on the subject. Thus she could form no idea of the knowledge I might have acquired. She knew only that I had written songs at Sillery, and that I was acquainted with the rules of poetry, but she held this kind of *succès de societé* in little esteem. We returned to Paris, whence she was to set out for Barrège.

The simplicity of my manners led my aunt to make me a constant witness of her artifices, which were sometimes of the most refined, sometimes of the most childish kind. One of the latter amused me too much for me ever to forget the slightest particular connected with it. She was trying to convince the Duke of Orleans that her unfortunate *sentiment* deprived her of sleep and appetite, that she could no longer either eat or sleep. In his presence she was certainly rigorously abstemious—but she made amends in his absence. It is true that she never sat down to table in her own house; but though she had no regular formal meals, she partook of food five or six times a day. One evening that I was with her, whilst we were certainly not expecting the duke, Mademoiselle Legrand, her waiting-maid, entered the room with a large silver porringer, holding some roast meat prepared with wine. In a careless and unwilling manner my aunt put the porringer on her lap, and by an *effort of reason* began to eat the roast meat, not a third of which remained when a carriage was heard

entering the court. I hastened to the window, and said that it was the Duke of Orleans. My aunt rung the bell with violence, but Mademoiselle Legrand did not hurry herself, and when she came said, that the duke was immediately behind her. My aunt thinks of nothing but of getting rid of the remains of the *rotie*, hastily orders it to be taken away, and then, thinking the servants would meet the duke, she calls back Mademoiselle Legrand, and sharply bids her put the fatal porringer, cover and all, under the bed. She is obeyed; but at the same moment, the folding-door opens wide, and the duke appears. He perceived the odour of the wine, and my aunt admitted that she had taken a small spoonful of it. Her worn out and languid look during the visit so inclined me to laughter, that I had great difficulty in restraining myself. Such is the excessive abasement and childishness to which people of talent may be led by ambitious schemes, when they consider these means useful to their advancement.

My aunt wished to keep me with her till she set out for Barrège. She gave me the apartment of M. de Montesson, and told me that my waiting-maid should have a mattress placed beside my bed. This was in the beginning of April, and M. de Genlis had just set out to join his regiment. We returned from Vincennes at night. My aunt wished immediately to put me in possession of my apartment, which was on

the ground floor. She asked me if I was afraid; I said that I was not, and to show my courage, I told her she had only to follow me, for I would go in first, and without a light. The footman was behind me with two lights, and I advanced boldly into the open antichamber, but scarcely had I put one foot in, than I leaped back with a frightful scream, for I had felt distinctly a large, cold, and bony hand spread against my face, and pushing me back. I almost swooned away in the arms of my aunt, who was greatly frightened at my dreadful agitation. She saw that something very strange must have happened, and enquired what it was. I told her, with trembling accents, that a skeleton hand had pushed me back. The footman entered with the lights, and immediately saw the cause of the pretended prodigy. It was a withered orange tree, that had been placed near the door, and one of the branches, stiff and dry, spread itself out before the door so as to come against my face. To the touch this branch really produced the illusion of a skeleton hand. Every one tried it, and they admitted that in a dead man's apartment, a person possessed with the fear of ghosts, would be as much terrified at this branch pressing against him as by the most horrible apparition.

My aunt set out for Barrège, but informed me that the Duke of Orleans would often come to see me till Madame de Puisieux took me to Sillery, and added,

that at his age, and with his well-known attachment for her, there was nothing wrong in me receiving him. He had never come to my house but once, at my last confinement, and then he came with the prince, his son. My aunt desired me to speak often to him about her, and to mention all our conversations in my letters. She again said that she wished he were quickly cured of his passion, if she were not such as he had first imagined, for it was terrible to afflict oneself so much as she did for troubles that perhaps were imaginary after all. I asked her what she would do if the passion were incurable. "Ah!" said she, "who can foresee? I only know that my fate will be altered." I knew what that meant, and promised to follow her intention, by relating the whole to the Duke of Orleans, for she had allowed me to tell him *frankly* the state of her heart. I was desirous that all these manœuvres might be successful, first, because I knew that it was my aunt's ardent wish; secondly, because I was not indifferent to the pleasure of having an aunt married to a prince of the blood; and lastly, because I was proud of being in some sort a negotiator in the business, at least during my aunt's absence at Barrège.

I returned with great joy to my house in the Rue Saint Dominique, where I found my charming Caroline, whom I left to my mother's care, during my absence. The Duke of Orleans came to see me the

day after my aunt's departure. I felt pretty well at my ease, because I had constantly seen him at my aunt's, but he had never heard me converse, and only knowing me by her account, he considered me a lively, open-hearted, and agreeable young woman, but totally incapable of observation or reflection. For my own part, the idea of these private conversations rather embarrassed me; I was not very sure how I should succeed. His first address made me smile, for he brought me a great quantity of sugarcandy of Fontainebleau, and told me that he remembered I had often asked him for some. However, in about a quarter of an hour's time, he remembered that he was afflicted by my aunt's departure, and spoke much about her, but I did not perceive any very lively passion in his heart, nor even a real attachment. His visit lasted only three quarters of an hour, and on leaving me, he said he would return in two days. His second visit was spirited; we first talked of my aunt; I praised her attachment to him, and he listened to me with a look of surprise at hearing me reason so seriously. I talked alone for a long time, and in such a romantic style as seemed altogether wonderful to him. At last I stopped to receive his compliments on my eloquence. He then told me, with a mournful look, *that he had never been loved for himself*. I was greatly surprised at this, but he often repeated it afterwards. I opposed his notion,

but made no great impression. He gradually changed the subject of conversation, and all at once began to relate to me his good fortune with the ladies, but his stories were always jumbled with the adventures of the Baron de Bezenval. His details, though very decorous in language, were horribly full of scandal, and were told with such simplicity, that I listened to them with great curiosity, unmixed with embarrassment. I am certain that the whole was true, for it was not boasting, but merely talkativeness and indiscretion. My astonishment was expressed in my looks, and highly diverted the duke; I must confess that I even asked the names of the parties, and, after promising secrecy, (which I have never broken,) the whole was confided to me. It may be necessary to state that all the heroines of these stories were women of very bad character, and that there were some of them even who had been hooted out of good company; but still there were a few to be met with at court and in society.

During a month, the duke regularly returned every two or three days to refresh my memory with these topics, and at last had such confidence in me, that he told me all his troublesome adventures with the late duchess. At the age of nineteen he had married her for love, and their love was mutual and unbounded till the birth of his son, which for a time seemed still to add to its force. She even displayed

so little modesty in the violence of her affection, that the Duchesse de Tollard said—"That she had succeeded in rendering the marriage union indecent." Hitherto the Duchess of Orleans had been the most loving and irreproachable wife imaginable; but, all of a sudden, she desired the duke to give her all the letters she had written to him, which were all equally *tender*. She wished, she said, to have the pleasure of reading them over with the answers, which she carefully preserved. The duke gave them, but desired her to take great care of them, and return them quickly; but her only object in asking for them was to destroy the whole, for her heart was changed, and she wished to annihilate the proofs of a sentiment which no longer survived. In this retrogade inconstancy, desirous of destroying the remnants of the past, in this shame of a legitimate attachment, and in the whole of this proceeding, there was such a combination of perfidiousness and depravity, that I was more struck with it than by the recital of his adventures. The duke likewise told me how he had become in love with my aunt, which was more singular than romantic. He told me that he found her charming, but they were very ceremonious in their intercourse; and far from being in love with her, his mind was then occupied with another lady—that was at the time of his first journey to Villers-Coterets. One day, while deer hunting in the forest, Madame de

Montesson was on horseback, and the duke happened to be close beside her at the very moment that the chase had become confused, and when the other lady, who was likewise on horseback, was far off in another avenue. One of the huntsmen proposed to the duke to wait there a few minutes, whilst he went forward to learn what had become of the stag and the hounds; he agreed, and dismounting from his horse at the same time with my aunt, went to sit down in a pretty little spot under the shade. The duke was fat, and the weather sultry; being excessively tired, and in the most violent perspiration, he requested the liberty of taking off his neckcloth, unbuttoned his coat, stretched himself, puffed and breathed in such an unceremonious and ludicrous manner, that my aunt burst out into a fit of laughter, and called him a *gros père* with such a charming liveliness and gaiety, that his heart was instantly taken by surprise, and he became in love with her. Nothing produces a more certain effect on princes than unexpected familiarity, gracefully succeeding respectful and reserved demeanour in their presence. This rise of a *great passion* was not less singular, however. The manner certainly did not belong to the age of Louis XIV., but taste had at this period lost much of its purity and elegance.

The letters of the Duke of Orleans to my aunt during her journey, were not at all satisfactory; one

of them so displeased her, that she wrote to me that she saw clearly he had none of the sentiments with which she thought him inspired. In this letter she could not conceal her spite; and in speaking of the duke, called him that light man (*cet homme leger*—inconsiderate). I could not help laughing at the expression, so inappropriate, whether we consider his mental or his physical qualities. The duke treated a love affair as an amusement, and never was the first to break it off. As long as the lady was near him, or listening to his conversation, he was constant; in fact, he was in love like a good soldier at his post, who never leaves it but when dismissed; so when there was no *post*, he entered into another service without chagrin or regret. He was never truly in love in the whole course of his life. If, at the time I am speaking of, an agreeable woman had been desirous of occupying the vacant place, nothing could have been easier. I wrote to my aunt to tell her that she was still *adored*, and to press her to hasten her return. She followed my advice.

During more than a month, I received regular visits from the duke. In this interval, there was a fête at court, a grand masked ball, but I forget the occasion of it. The duke requested me to get Madame de Puisieux to take me to it, where he agreed to meet me. I never saw such a large company as at this ball. I went in a dress domino, with only a small

mask, (called a *loup*,) that concealed nothing but my eyes and nose. Besides myself, Madame de Puisieux took with her, her niece, Madame de St. Chamand and the Marquis de Bouzoles, to give us his arm. We sat down on a bench in the least crowded room we could find. In half an hour the duke arrived, concealed in a mask and domino; it was not difficult to recognize him, for he looked like a huge tower. He offered to take me into the other rooms, and promised to bring me back in an hour. I put myself under his protection, and while we were moving forward, one of the masqueraders turned towards him, and exclaimed, *Make room for the cathedral of Rheims*, which made every one laugh, even the duke himself, who said, that such a respectable similitude was excellent in so great a crowd. We passed through two large rooms without accident, but about the middle of the third, immediately adjoining that in which was the royal family, I was suddenly snatched from the duke's arm. I was pulled backwards and forwards, according to the current, for many were going back; I was pushed forwards, driven back, squeezed, and lifted off my feet. In this crisis, I looked around me for the duke, but I had quite lost sight of him, and my fear was extreme, when all at once, a person in a blue domino, very tall and thin, pushed every one aside, flew towards me, and laying hold of me as if I had been a puppet,

pulled me away with the most violent impetuosity, and finally carried me into the royal apartment. I had given up every idea of dancing or seeing sights. I leaned against the wall, and felt extremely unwell. At last I began to breathe freely, and to express my gratitude to my liberator,; when he spoke, and I recognized my friend's brother-in-law, the Viscount de Custine, only eight days returned from Corsica, (whither I had sent him, as I will mention in the sequel,) where he had shown the most distinguished bravery. The moment at which this discovery was made, was highly disagreeable to me, and I shall state my reasons. It is the only incident of the kind that I shall relate, but the story is too moral to be omitted; and at any rate, it will appear by the way in which it ended, that vanity could not excite me to repeat the particulars. When I had somewhat recovered from my fright, I requested to be led back to Madame de Puisieux, but we did not return by the way we came, as the viscount took me round by private passages. In them we found a very pretty lady from Bourdeaux, named Madame Rousse de Corse, who had been carried out wounded and insensible; as if from a field of battle, from the horrible crowd we had traversed. The poor lady had fallen, and been trampled on; she was in a most pitiable state. A surgeon was sent for, and she was bled on the spot. I shuddered when I looked at her,

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and greatly pleased the viscount, who wished to prevent me stopping, by telling him that I wished to look at all I had been saved from by his kindness.

The Duke of Orleans set out for Villers-Coterets on the 6th of May, and a few days afterwards Madame de Puisieux took me thither to spend a fortnight. We found a large company collected; amongst others, was the Marquise de Boufflers, mother of the celebrated Chevalier de Boufflers; she was witty and satirical, but her daughter, Madame de Cussé, afterwards called Madame de Boisgelin, was neither the one nor the other, which seemed very singular in such a family. The Count de Maillebois was likewise of the party; he was thought to be a man of talent; I never perceived it, but found him very tiresome. We had M. de Castries, afterwards Marshal of France, whose manners and conversation I greatly liked. His talents were solid as well as agreeable; his wish to please, mild, calm, without pertness, or forwardness, unruffled by vanity, springing solely from good-nature, and not from the self-love that wishes to dazzle and to carry every thing before it. Another guest, the Baron de Bezenval, whom I had already seen a thousand times in society. He was of the same age as the Duke of Orleans, but his person was still charming, and he was a great favourite with the ladies. So excessively ignorant was he, that he could scarcely write a card, yet he had

just that kind of talent necessary for telling trifles gracefully and politely. He was said to be bad hearted, he was certainly thoughtless and dissipated; his demeanour was pleasing, where his interest did not clash, and his conversation sensible, when there was nobody present whom he could ridicule; to us, his frank ways, unaffected disposition, and lively gaiety, made him highly agreeable. The Marquis du Châtelet and his lady were likewise of the party. The marchioness was one of the worthiest persons at court, and the same may be said of her husband. If we had believed the story told about his birth, we might have been surprised at his mild disposition and not very bright mind; but his judgment was sound, his heart excellent, and the constancy of his friendship for the Duc de Choiseul offered a splendid example to the courtiers. Monsieur and Madame de Vaupalière were likewise at Villers-Coterets all the time we remained. The husband would have been very agreeable, had it not been for his propensity to *play*, which formed not only his happiness, but sole occupation. He would have disgusted our *romantiques* with reverie, of which they are so fond; he was much given to reverie, but he thought only of play. His lady was charming, though more than forty; she had those graces that do not become old, an unaffected disposition, lively wit, original character, and the most even and agreeable temper ever seen.

It was here that I learned all the advantage of having for a mentor a person really desirous of displaying the accomplishments of the lady she introduces into society. I was highly successful, not only with my harp, singing, and the making of proverbs, but I was much praised for my talent and conversation, though they were both common enough. When I wished to withdraw at eleven o'clock, as usual, I was forcibly detained; what I said was repeated and praised, and words of it quoted next day, and most commonly these pretended *bons-mots* were not worth the trouble. For this success I was wholly indebted to Madame de Puisieux and the Duke of Orleans, who were always talking of my agreeable ways. They would scarcely let us go at the end of twelve days. I had often spoken to the Duke of Orleans about my aunt, in our walks on the terrace of the *château* of Villers-Coterets. I remarked that a letter announcing her return in three weeks had renewed his flame; he was in love again, for fear of being pouted; he promised to write me, and kept his word.

On leaving Villers-Coterets, we did not go to Sillery, as Madame de Puisieux wished to make me acquainted with Vaudreuil, the finest estate in Normandy; or rather, she wished to show me off in a castle where agreeable accomplishments and fêtes were esteemed, and with the society of which I was

not acquainted, because it was not one which she generally frequented. We were to stay only eight days at Vaudreuil, but we remained five weeks, and they were the pleasantest I ever spent in my life. The master of the *château* was the President Portal, an old gentleman, witty, gay, and good-natured. We found most excellent company, fond of amusement, and among the rest, a relation of the president, formerly very celebrated for her beauty. She was then fifty, her first husband was M. Amelot, minister of foreign affairs; when she became a widow, she swore that she would preserve her freedom, and she kept it long; at last she saw at Vaudreuil M. Damézague, fifteen years younger than herself. She was so greatly prepossessed against him, that she wished to leave the house the moment he arrived; but in eight days he was able to overcome all her prepossessions, and to make her in love with him—within that time the proud widow married him in the chapel of the castle. They had been three years married, when we found them at Vaudreuil, and they lived together like two turtle-doves. Madame Damézague was extremely beautiful; her husband was handsome, and one of the tenderest and most affectionate of partners. He had the most lively, juvenile way I ever saw; thought of nothing but amusement, was always playing tricks, or giving fêtes, and had always some plan of diversion in his

mind. After a day of the most delightful amusement, he would ask in the evening—*What shall we do to-morrow morning?* It was necessary to tell him to keep him quiet; without a fixed plan of the kind, he could not have slept. Of the singular marriage of Madame Damézague, I formed the novel entitled *Les Preventions d'une Femme*, which M. Radet has turned into a very pretty *vaudeville*.

Amidst the gay society of Vaudreuil, I particularly remarked a young lady, whose lovely form and pleasing manners struck me with admiration. This was the Comtesse de Merode, (afterwards Comtesse de Lannoy,) she was three years older than me, with a most beautiful shape, a fine face, clever disposition, most lively imagination, and a thousand engaging qualities. She inspired me with a strong affection at first sight, and this I have always felt for every person I ever loved. On her I produced the same effect, and the same evening she took me to her room, where we sat up together till three in the morning. It would seem that such lively impressions, such quick friendships, would belong only to the period of youth, yet I have always preserved them, and never love any one for whom I do not feel an immediate attachment. Next morning, M. Damézague came to ask us *what we would do in the evening*, when I proposed to make proverbs, but he affirmed that no one in the *château* could do them, and added, with a smile, that I ought

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to make out one by myself to give them a lesson. I answered that the thing was not impossible. I tried, and invented my famous scene of *La Cloison,* which I performed so often afterwards, and out of which I subsequently made two little plays, that have been imitated on the stage, particularly in *Aucassin and Nicolétte.* My *Cloison* was so successful, that it was played five or six days successively; as an afterpiece, we gave a burlesque song, very drolly given by M. Damézague, with the accompaniment of my harp. I formed a small company for the purpose of making up proverbs, and Madame de Merode did great credit to my lessons. We had charming walks and rides in the park, which was of immense extent and admirable beauty. We heard often of a neighbouring mountain called the *Montagne des deux Amans,* famous for its immense height, extensive prospect, the difficulty of ascending it, and above all, by the tradition that explains its title of *the two lovers' mountain.* The tale goes, that in old times, it was called *the inaccessible mountain,* on account of the supposed impossiblity of reaching its summit. A young shepherd of the valley could only obtain the hand of a girl with whom he was in love, by carrying her thither on his shoulders; and this condition, it was thought, would put an end to the connexion; but love hesitates at nothing, and the lovers accepted the condition, to the great astonishment of the inhabitants of the valley. The lover places his beloved

on his shoulders, thinks he could carry her thus to the world's end, and that so sweet a load would reanimate him were his strength to fail. He laughs at the mortal anxiety of his relations and friends, sets out in triumph, and climbs the mountain; but, at the top of the highest ridge, while making the last step which raises him to the summit—he breathes his last! Such is the tradition, which looks like an allegory; for, in fact, does not love promise every thing, undertake every thing, and having obtained every thing, immediately expire!—The tale adds, that the young girl, in her despair, leaped into the river that flows at the foot of the rugged mountain, which, henceforth, was called the *Montagne des deux Amans*. On this romantic foundation, I wrote out, in two days, a drama, which I read to Madame de Merode, the Comte de Caraman, (brother of the Marquis and nephew of President Portal,) and M. Damézague. They found the play excellent, and we settled that it should be performed; while M. de Caraman made a charming little theatre be erected in the *orangerie*. In the meantime, Madame de Merode and I determined on climbing the mountain; but as the president's postillion had broken his leg on it only two months before, I knew that Madame de Puisieux would be opposed to our undertaking, so we kept it secret, and agreed to have it done before she rose in the morning. The mountain is noways inaccessible, but only very tedious and fa-

tiguing to climb. We knew that there was a hermitage on the top, so that we were very sure we could do what had been done by hermits, or rather, by monks, for it was a small convent. We rose at daylight, and by five o'clock Madame de Merode, M. de Caraman, M. Damézague and I had reached the foot of the mountain. We were forced to stop halfway, for Madame de Merode, not much accustomed to walking, was quite worn out. At last we reached the top, and found some good-natured monks, who were delighted at seeing us, and who gave us some goats' milk for breakfast, which we found delicious. Their little convent was placed amidst the table-land of the mountain, and was really charming. The most delightful prospect was to be seen on every side. These pious hermits still hovered over the world they had left—they only saw on its surface its most virtuous features, the labours of the fields. I envied their dwelling and their tranquillity; for even amidst the tumult of society and dissipation, I have never, without the profoundest emotion, caught a glimpse of unbroken solitude and uninterrupted repose. I did not then foresee, that twenty years afterwards, this convent would be destroyed, and its virtuous inhabitants dispersed—perhaps put to death!

The theatre was finished in a week, for the works were carried on night and day, and decorations ready made were brought from Rouen. I distributed the

characters of my play in the interval; mine was that of an old enchanter, *two hundred years old*, supposed to be placed on the *inaccessible* mountain, where he was to remain until the arrival of *two perfect lovers*, whom he had been looking for for more than a hundred and fifty years; I was delighted with the character, because I had a white beard and a wig. Madame de Merode and M. de Caraman were the two lovers. My play ended happily, for the lovers survived, to serve as models to the lovers of future ages, and the perfection of their mutual love removed the enchantment from the old hermit of the mountain. The play was full of agreeable allusions to the master of the house, and every one of the party. It may be supposed that nothing was wanting to its complete success, and that the author was loudly called for; we were required to perform it again, but Madame de Puisieux found the play too short, and desired me to lengthen it. Every one called on me to perform Roxelane in the *Trois Sultanes*, for I was so often compared to Roxelane in my youth, that I was as much tired with this kind of compliment, as with hearing it said that I certainly played better on the harp than *King David*. As we had not a copy of the *Trois Sultanes*, M. de Caraman sent a messenger to Paris for one, and for several other things, amongst the rest, for bagpipes, for mine were at Sillery with my trunks. But I told our performers that I would write a comedy of the

Trois Sultanes with the same incidents, but an entirely different plot. I wrote it in six or seven days, in three acts, and in prose, with interludes. It was learned in proportion as I wrote it. It was quite different from Favart's play; I do not think it was good, but I believe the dialogue was pretty, and there was certainly some action and interest in the plot, entirely wanting in Favart. I took a very brilliant character, in which I sung, danced, played on the harpsichord, the harp, the guitar, the bagpipes, the tabor, and the viol. The last two instruments we got from Rouen, and nothing but the top of my viol was wanting, but I had not played on it for more than three years, and my mandoline would not have done well after my guitar, on which I played infinitely better. M. de Nedonchel, who came to join us from Paris, took a character, while Madame de Merode played extremely well in the part of a Spanish lady in love with a young Frenchman, performed by M. de Caraman. A young man from a small town adjoining (Pont-de-l'Arche) played charmingly the character of the Grand Seigneur. With the new play, we again performed my *Montagne des deux Amans*. The whole was so successful, that the tumult of applause made Madame de Puisieux burst into tears, and this was the true success I wished for. After supper, I accompanied her to her room, while Madame de Merode was vainly waiting for me, for I re-

mained with Madame de Puisieux till day-break. How she loved me!—as I have since loved!——how grateful I felt for her kindness! how dear to me was this virtuous and affectionate guide! Her features, her smile, her dress, the sound of her voice, and all our private conversations are unalterably engraved in my remembrance—and above all, the conversation of that night, in which she showed so much tenderness towards me! She held my hands in hers, looked to me with inexpressible affection, and often repeated these memorable words:—"Yes, you will have an extraordinary destiny!—*but what will it be?*" Her tone indicated alarm for my future happiness—alas! it was a presentiment!

We performed our little play three times over, with only a day of interval between each performance; people came to see it not only from Pont-de-l'Arche, but from Rouen, and the crowd was very great at the two last performances. We then put a plan into execution, the thought of which alone delighted me—that was to go to Dieppe to see the ocean, which I had never seen. The only difficulty was to get Madame de Puisieux to take us thither, for she would not have let me gone without her. One morning I told Madame de Merode and M. de Caraman that I would try the negotiation in the course of the day. They thought I would do so in private, and to their great surprise, it was in the drawing-room after

dinner, and before all the company. I approached Madame de Puisieux, and called out to her to be on her guard, for I had resolved to employ all my cunning to circumvent her: she laughed, and replied gracefully as usual. I then told her that I was passionately desirous of seeing the sea, when she interrupted me at once, and exclaimed—"Very well, we shall go to Dieppe to-morrow." I was so much affected by her kindness that my eyes were instantly filled with tears, but ashamed of my weakness, I inclined my face in her hand to conceal my emotion; she felt the tears falling on her hand, and said—"Come, lift up your head." I obeyed, and the company saw that I was crying. She affectionately embraced me again and again. "See," said she, "if I can refuse you any thing." There was nobody present but persons well inclined towards me, and this scene greatly affected them.

Madame de Puisieux, Madame de Merode, M. de Caraman, and I, set out next day at twelve o'clock, in a *berline*. We were escorted by Messrs. Damézague, Nedonchel, and Vougny, in a post-châise. The journey was very gay, thanks to all the pranks of M. Damézague and M. de Nedonchel, who during the whole way got to the post-houses before us for the purpose of playing off the wildest stratagems, that kept us in a roar of laughter. Our stay at Dieppe was equally gay. My surprise, admiration, and awe

were extreme at the aspect of the ocean, seen for the first time from the pier of Dieppe, whence it is seen in all its majesty. I missed only one circumstance—that of being alone. I confess that the noisy gaiety of my companions was highly disagreeable to me on this occasion. Whilst contemplating this wonderful sight, I was hurt at hearing laughter and ridicule around me, as if we were in a drawing-room or by the fire-side; and they were equally astonished with my grave looks, and agreed that I was very dull on the sea-shore. I took a little voyage which did not turn out well, for I became so terribly sick that we were obliged to gain the shore after having been out no farther than a league. We visited the shops, which were full of pretty articles in ivory, and Madame de Puisieux gave me an immense quantity. With fish we made excellent cheer; spent a whole day at Dieppe; and, delighted with our journey, returned to Vaudreuil, where new fêtes were in preparation.

While in the drawing-room after dinner, the day after our return, the president received a letter which he read aloud, informing him that *pirates* had seen Madame de Merode and me at sea, and intended to carry us off to take us to the Grand Seigneur's seraglio. We were not greatly alarmed at this; however we asked him how we could preserve ourselves from so imminent a danger, and he replied that he

saw no other way than to get ourselves received as vestals in the temple of the *petit bois.* This was a charming hut, formed like a temple, and placed in a part of the garden near the castle; it was called the convent, was surrounded with walls, and completely secluded, for it was in the president's private garden, which he carefully kept under lock and key, and which nobody entered but in his company. He had taken us thither several times to breakfast. It was settled that at eight o'clock next evening we should be received into the temple of Vesta. M. de Caraman led us thither, and immediately disappeared. We found the temple adorned with flowers, and all the ladies of the party dressed as vestals, with Madame de Puisieux at their head as high priestess, and the president as high priest. He was the only man present within the enclosure. An harangue was delivered, and Madame de Vougny recited some very pretty verses. The ceremony of our reception was gone through. Day-light was fast disappearing, when we heard, all at once, very noisy music in the Turkish style, and messengers came round us on all hands to say that the Grand Seigneur was coming in person, with a great escort, to carry off all the vestals from the temple. Our high priest showed on this occasion a firmness worthy of his rank, for he declared that the gates should not be opened. Meanwhile the terrible music was approaching with alarming rapidity,

and the Turks soon made thundering knocks at the gates. To avoid a scene that I disliked beforehand, I advised that the gates should be opened, and that we should surrender at discretion; but the president was firmly attached to his own plan, and fond of the pantomime, so that he reproached me with cowardice, and made the sultan be informed that the spot was consecrated ground. Thereupon, though the walls were pretty high, all the Turks jumped over immediately, several among them (who were servants or peasants) carrying torches; the gates were opened; more than three hundred Turks entered the garden; the gentlemen of the party carried off the ladies; the rest carried off about a dozen waiting maids, who had been mingled with us to increase our number. I always hated confusion and tumult, even in games, and this noisy party both displeased and frightened me, for I was afraid there might be some legs broken; and at seeing some Turks approach the vestals rather roughly, I thought the whole plan abominable. While in this bad humour, by the light of the torches I perceived M. de Caraman all glittering with gold and jewels, (but who did not look well in his turban,) and approaching me with an air of triumph, that roused my anger. I absolutely refused to be carried off, and this in such a rude way that he was greatly hurt. He laid hold of me, I resisted, pinched, scratched, and kicked his legs, till he got into a passion, and

then carried me off in spite of all my resistance. I was placed on a magnificent palanquin, while the sultan followed me on foot, and reproached me bitterly. Seeing, however, that I ought not to spoil the fête by teasing him who really gave it, and who had become the hero only to make me queen, I endeavoured to laugh it off, and succeeded in appeasing him. All the ladies were placed in charming palanquins, and the Turks followed on foot, with a band of music playing. In this manner we traversed throughout their whole length these immense and beautiful gardens, which were magnificently illuminated. The prospect was delightful. We found at the extremity of the park a splendid ball-room, with plenty of orange trees, garlands of flowers, designs, and refreshments. The Grand Seigneur declared me his favourite sultana, and we danced all night. I have had many fêtes given me in the course of my life, but I never saw any so ingenious and delightful as this.

Three or four days afterwards we set out for Sillery. Though I had spent at Vaudreuil the most dissipated five weeks of my life, yet I never omitted reading every morning during my toilette. I took with me the *Revolutions de Suede* of the Abbé de Vertot; and as the president had some books, I read also the *Conjuration de Bedmar contre Venise*, and again read over the *Pensees du Comte Orenstiern*, which I had formerly read. Our adieus at parting were very af-

fectionate; we promised to meet again at Paris, and to become inseparable—but in the confusion of high society, each was carried in a different direction, and we saw each other no more. This was not the case with Madame de Merode and me, for Madame de Puisieux invited her to Sillery, which she promised and performed.

In going through Rheims, Madame de Puisieux agreed to let me spend eight days with my kind and charming grandmother, Madame de Dromenil. I then went to Sillery, where I found a large company assembled. There were M. de la Roche Aimon, Archbishop of Rheims, a prelate of haughty look, virtuous, austere, of great talents; his *coadjuteur*, M. de Talleyrand—not he who has subsequently become so celebrated—the one in question had nothing to become so, for piety and the love of peace make no display. He was very pleasing in company by his harmless and graceful gaiety. The archbishop had likewise brought with him the young Abbé de Talleyrand, who was designed for a clergyman, and already *en soutane*, though only twelve or thirteen years of age. He was a little lame, was pale and silent, but his countenance was agreeable, and indicative of a talent for observation. There were likewise at Sillery the Duc d'Aumont, an excellent and sensible man, said not to be very clever in society, but this is always said of those who do not

possess external accomplishmeuts, who do not shine in conversation, and who are always judicious in their opinions: the Maréchal d'Etrée and his lady; M. Damécourt, a very witty lawyer, who with rather a ludicrous shape, was a man *à bonnes fortunes;* the old Princess de Ligne, who had the ugliest face of a woman of fifty I ever saw; a fat, shining countenance, without rouge, lividly pale, and adorned with three chins, one below the other; Monsieur and Madame d'Egmont, Mademoiselle de Sillery, sister of M. de Puisieux, a real saint, as witty and amiable as she was pious, kind, and virtuous: my brother-in-law and his lady; Monsieur and Madame de Louvois, the latter in bad health; the Marquis de Souvré, with his daughters, the nieces of Madame de Puisieux; Mesdames de Sailly and de St. Chamand; the Comte de Rochefort; M. Conway, son of the Marquis of Hertford, formerly English Ambassador at the court of France; and the old Duke of Villars, who rouged, painted his eyebrows, and kept little cotton balls in his mouth for the purpose of swelling out his cheeks.

This journey, like the former, was full of amusements and fêtes of my inventing. We performed the two plays I had written at Vaudreuil, the *Deux Sultanes* and the *Montagne des Deux Amans,* along with the *Folies Amoureuses* of Regnard. In July, M. de Genlis returned from his regiment, and two days

afterwards I was highly delighted with the arrival of Madame de Merode, who was a useful and agreeable addition to our projected fêtes. She remained till the middle of September, after which I went to Louvois for ten days, and then returned to Sillery.

I have not yet mentioned an individual who was established in the house of M. de Puisieux, who nevertheless requires particular notice. This was M. Tiquet, who had formerly been secretary of embassy to M. de Puisieux, and had preserved a most exclusive and passionate attachment to his master. He was about fifty years of age, of great probity, well informed, and a very worthy man, but had the most ridiculous appearance imaginable. He was very tall, very thin, with square flat shoulders of the most singular kind, and a neck for length out of all bounds. Above this neck appeared a bloated face, with a huge nose, small, round, blueish eyes, without eyelids or eyebrows, and an enormously wide mouth, the whole surmounted with a light coloured wig, covered with pomatum and slightly powdered. He always wore a tight grey coat buttoned from top to bottom—and never was a more singular picture of finished ugliness. But though I was surprised at his way, I did not dislike him; for there was nothing ill-natured or concealed in his look, and his smile indicated humour and single-mindedness. In truth, M. Tiquet smiled but seldom, for he was of a grave, silent, and

solemn disposition; and having never been a favourite of the ladies, though he did not absolutely hate them, he teazed them always, particularly when they were young and good-looking. As for the old ladies, he delighted in contradicting them. He did this even to Madame de Puisieux, who was not backward in answering him, though she often thought him perfectly insufferable. Their discussions were never violent, deference being paid on one hand, and politeness shown on the other; but still there was a great degree of tartness displayed on both sides. During my first stay at Sillery, M. de Puisieux told me one morning, whilst riding out with him, that I had made, if not a very brilliant, certainly a very wonderful conquest—of M. Tiquet; and that I was indebted for it to the correct nature of my studies, for he alone was acquainted with them, as he kept the key of the library, and lent me the books I asked for. M. de Puisieux added, that M. Tiquet had said, that when *my youthful vivacity had gone by, I should become a woman of great merit.* But he did not tell M. de Puisieux a circumstance, for which, in his own mind, he prized me more highly than for my *correct studies,* I mean, that in his disputes with Madame de Puisieux, I never said he was in the wrong, when she asked my opinion, for I thought she often pressed him too hard, and very often I decided in his favour. In this, as in many other cir-

cumstances, I greatly admired the excellent temper of Madame de Puisieux, who never became angry on this account. When M. de Puisieux told her, in my presence, that I had completely subjugated the inflexible heart of M. Tiquet, she replied with a smile, that I had used plenty of coquetry for the purpose. Two days afterwards I actually did make use of some coquetry. I asked him for the *Traité de Westphalié*, a book he held in the highest esteem, which he knew by heart, and was continually quoting. My credit with him, from that moment, was unbôunded, his eyes constantly followed me in the drawing-room, and when he saw me playing tricks, he smiled, and more than once was actually seen to laugh. What gave me great pleasure was, that Madame de Puisieux, in seeing the strong interest he displayed for me, lost all her ill-will towards him; he perceived the change, and became much more agreeable in his intercourse with her.

Besides the kindness of Madame de Puisieux, what most contributed in rendering Sillery dear to me, was, that during the three successive years I made such protracted visits, I never had the smallest difference with the inmates, nor perceived the slightest feeling of envy towards me. Madame and M. de Puisieux himself had shown me kindness they had never shown to any one, and this preference, displayed on all occasions, often in spite of my re-

monstrances, never raised the slightest invidious feeling. It is true, that the Maréchale d'Etrée, and the nieces of Madame de Puisieux, so kind to me at all times, were fifteen or twenty years older than me; but my sister-in-law, and Madame de Louvois were about my own age, and had a right to be equally caressed; yet they thought it quite natural that these caresses should be exclusively bestowed on what they called my *gentillesse*. I was the real sovereign of Sillery, nothing was done without consulting me, all my desires were foreseen and provided for, and the very domestics of the house served me with a zeal they scarcely displayed for their masters. But I did not abuse my power, for I only employed it for the enjoyment of the company. I was happy at my situation, and affected by the kindness shown me, but I was not vain on that account. I was always in good humour, and showed such deference to others, that they could never form the idea that I was desirous of ruling. In all the plans I formed for our amusement, I took particular care to form previous arrangements with Mesdames de Louvois, de Sailly, de St. Chamand, and my sister-in-law, to mingle their ideas with my own, and to give them all the credit afterwards;—and thus was I beloved. In after times, in other situations, I preserved the same disposition, but I was not equally fortunate.

During my stay here, I wrote a great many lite-

rary trifles, and a song *en pot-pourri*, in eighteen couplets, to all kinds of common airs. I wrote eight of them, and M. de Genlis the remainder. We sung them together, each stanza alternatively. I ardently pursued my studies in literature and natural history, and made a great many extracts, for I was extremely fond of increasing my stores of this kind. The close of our residence here was troubled by a most dangerous and unaccountable incident.

On returning from a ride with M. de Puisieux, one day at twelve o'clock, I entered the dinner-hall, where two buckets were always prepared before dinner, one with iced water, the other not iced, and called *M. de Puisieux's water*, as he drank no other; but though this was not my favourite, I was warm and thirsty, and at the same time afraid of the iced water, so that I drank of M. de Puisieux's with wine, and then returned to my room. I felt sick immediately, and only obtained relief after the most violent vomiting. This over, I felt no further effects, dressed, thought no more of it, nor did I even mention it before dinner. There I drank nothing but iced water. M. de Puisieux being rather indisposed, took nothing but a little *tisane*, made in the kitchen, and stayed in the drawing-room with his lady, who never sat down to table. While at dinner, the old Abbé de St. Pouen, a relation of Madame de Puisieux, left the table, complaining of a severe colic. Imme-

diately after dinner, the *Coadjuteur* of Rheims, M. Tiquet, and M. de Genlis, complained of heart-burn, and they were the only persons who drank of the water that was not iced. They retired to the *salon*, but were obliged to leave it to relieve themselves. Suspicion fell on verdigris as the cause, and all the saucepans were examined, but were found perfectly clean; and, at any rate, those who had not been attacked had partaken of every dish like the rest. As M. de Puisieux ate little himself, and for more than fifteen years kept a very strict regimen, he always thought that others ate too much, and attributed the present symptoms of illness to previous indigestion; so that, instead of condoling with the sick, he preached sobriety to them. In the meantime, M. de Genlis had a most violent fit of vomiting, and poor Abbé de St. Pouen, who was seventy-four years old, was put to bed very ill; M. de Puisieux would have them to take nothing but warm water, while his lady sent to Rheims for a doctor. After much suffering, M. de Genlis would absolutely return to the drawing-room, in spite of me, but he was much altered, and looked very poorly. A servant entered while M. de Puisieux was lecturing him on the sin of gormandizing, and related, that M. de Renac, (who had not been at dinner, and was just returned that moment from hunting,) had drank a glass of M. de Puisieux's water, which instantly made him ill,

and that the same thing had happened to his servant. It was now evident that the water must have been impregnated with poison, and Madame de Puisieux ordered it to be thrown away immediately, which was done, while it ought to have been kept to be analysed. The doctor arrived, and found poor Abbé de St. Pouen very badly, as well as Paul, M. de Puisieux's attendant, who, in passing through the dinner-hall had twice drank of the dangerous liquid. The abbé took all the sacraments during the night, but he survived, notwithstanding. The doctor positively assured us that poison had been administered. For myself, I felt no further effects; M. Tiquet drank so little water with his wine, that he was very slightly indisposed; M. de Renac and his servant were more so, but not badly; the *Coadjuteur*, and M. de Genlis suffered greatly, and the abbé and M. de Puisieux's attendant were dangerously ill. None of the company but them had drank of the water. The sick were ordered to drink *èau thériacale*, and then to take nothing but milk for three days. We were busy only in imagining whence the poison came —but we thought it could not be accidental, and the idea was terribly alarming. The *maitre d'hotel*, the faithful Milot, who had been almost frantic at the suspicion thrown on his saucepans, was ordered into the *salon*, and asked how this horrible mystery could be cleared up; for we thought that some of the ser-

vants might have thrown something into the water, merely out of ill-will to one of the valets, who were continually going backwards and forwards in the hall, and drinking out of the buckets. M. de Puisieux told Milot to learn who had been in the hall, and Milot went out for the purpose. Each of the company then mentioned his servant's character, and M. de Genlis said he was sure of his, but my brother-in-law owned that he could not say the same of his own, which made M. de Puisieux exclaim, "I believe you—you mind nothing but their size." In fact, he had a new one at that very time, called the *giant*, on account of his height, which was above six feet.

When Milot came back, he addressed himself to my brother-in-law,—"Monsieur le marquis," said he, "I believe it is the scoundrel of a *giant* who has done the deed——." "In that case," exclaimed my brother-in-law, "we must not let him escape;" and he indicated what precautions were necessary to prevent him disappearing, which M. Tiquet went to put into execution. Milot continued his story, and said, that a cook was in the court at eleven o'clock, and saw the *giant* come out of the hall; that having come up to him, to ask if he would play a game at quoits, he perceived that one of his ruffles was wet, and told him he had been dabbling in the buckets, which he denied, and said he did not even know that there was water in the hall. "The villain!" ex-

claimed my brother-in-law, "it must be him—we must examine him ourselves, and then I will give him up to justice!"

Let any one reflect on this incident. My brother-in-law was heir to the magnificent estate of Sillery, but his claim was set aside, and one of his servants poisons the water usually drank by the actual owner; and if M. de Puisieux, at his time of life, and with his delicate constitution, had not that day been accidentally unwell, but had sat down to dinner and drank of the water, he who never took wine but with the dessert, it is most certain that death would have immediately ensued, and my brother-in-law would that evening have been possessor of Sillery. Yet such were the unsuspicious feelings of those times, that there was not, I will not say the slightest suspicion, but not even the idea that he could for a moment be affected by the consequences of the accident. Not a look was to be seen, not a word was heard that had any reference to him. No one thought he ought to be more uneasy or embarrassed than the rest of the company, and he never thought of it himself, which shows the high esteem in which he held the master of the castle. He examined the giant in the chamber of M. de Puisieux, in presence of that gentleman, M. Tiquet, and my husband. The scoundrel denied every thing, but my brother-in-law threatened to give him up to the vengeance of

the law, if he did not instantly make a full confession. He then owned that he had put an emetic into the water, but denied putting poison. When strictly interrogated as to his motives, and why he had chosen the water that was not iced, he answered, that he had no intention of injuring his master. When his master strongly urged him to tell why he had acted thus towards others, he had the impudence to exclaim that it was not he who was heir to the estate. My brother-in-law was determined on delivering him up to the police, but M. de Puisieux would not allow it; so that he was only turned away, with orders to leave the province immediately, and not to think of becoming any thing but a soldier, for if he took service, he would be instantly reported. My brother-in-law made his livery be torn from his back, and burned before him, in the little wood called *le Menil,* for no servant, he told him, would wear it—he was then driven with ignominy from the house. We got over the accident, and had only to drink great quantities of milk for three days. The doctor always maintained that it was poison, and not an emetic. At any rate, whoever could have given such a violent emetic, was equally capable of giving poison; or, perhaps, he thought, that an emetic would not leave such strong proofs of the crime. This singular event was much talked of in Paris, but produced not the slightest suspicion against my brother-in-law. In the mean-

time, Milot put a padlock to the water-buckets, and this precaution filled me with sadness, made me always think of poison, so that the latter part of our stay was highly disagreeable.

We spent two or three days with Madame d'Egmont, at Braisne, in our way to Paris, where we arrived at the end of October.

During my stay at Sillery, I received several very affectionate letters from the Duke of Orleans. My aunt had returned from Barrège, and the waters had cured her of her unfortunate passion for the Duc de Guines. She did not say so, but she wrote me that *solitude had restored her peace of mind*—which I understood to signify, that there was no longer any thing to oppose her union with the Duke of Orleans.

I flew to my aunt immediately on my arrival, and she showed me as much confidence as her disposition would allow, for there was always some artifice and concealment in all her confidential communications. The duke offered to marry her secretly, but she displayed a reluctance, prompted, as she said, by her delicacy, which duped me for a time, but which was nothing else but a plan to increase her influence. She told the duke, that she was determined not to marry him, unless he had the consent of his son, the Duke de Chartres. This resolution she announced in such a dignified manner, that the duke was enchanted, and spoke of it to me with admiration. He

was reckoned an excellent father, and whether this character be merited or not, those who enjoy it, like to preserve it as much as possible. Besides, the duke loved his son as much as a weak-headed man can love any one. He told him the secret immediately, and strongly panegyrized the magnanimity of Madame de Montesson. At this epoch, they thought only of a conscientious, and consequently, a very private marriage. But the Duc de Chartres did not like her, for he thought her too affected, too forward, and too insinuating; and he saw the schemes she laid to entrap him, by flattery and a show of affection. To please him, she tried fits of extravagant gaiety, bursts of laughter, and those childish and caressing ways, which he called *des mievreries ridicules*. This prince had a defect very injurious in a man of his rank—that of absolutely hating, not what was worthy of contempt and indignation, but what had not sufficient gracefulness and taste, or which he fancied ridiculous. His tact in this respect was very fine and correct. He respectfully, but coldly answered the Duke of Orleans, that a son had no consent to offer to his father, and he went not beyond this. My aunt determined on speaking to him herself, and greatly embarrassed him by the affection she displayed, but, as she still persisted in asking his consent, he answered at length that he would give it with great pleasure, if he were sure his father's resolution was really fixed, which

time only could show. She immediately exclaimed, that nothing would please her better than this certainty and a long trial, and proposed two years. The Duc de Chartres did not expect so long a delay would have been yielded, but he gracefully accepted the offer, adding, that the whole must previously be approved of by his father. He told Madame de Montesson on leaving her, that he was going to the country for a few days, and requested her to write him the decision of the Duke of Orleans She perceived that he wished her to bind herself by a written engagement. With the consent of the duke, she wrote to him, and in her letter (which I have seen) gave a solemn promise not to marry his father within the two years. The Duc de Chartres always preserved the letter, and eight months afterwards wrote a note on the margin of the first page, that gave my aunt great uneasiness.

Madame de Montesson pretended to be perfectly pleased with the Duc de Chartres, and told her confidents, that he had agreed to her marriage with his father, but she said nothing about the conditions. When the whole plan had been properly arranged, she lost no time in announcing to the Duke of Orleans, that she had formed another resolution, namely, that she would not marry him without the *king's written consent*, with a promise that the marriage should be kept private, and that she should not go to court, an illusive promise if she had children.

The duke was not only surprised, but actually thunderstruck at this new pretension; he fruitlessly opposed it, but was forced to yield. My aunt was quite right on this point, for a clandestine marriage is really odious, when it springs not from mutual love; I do not esteem the ambition by which she was guided, but in the whole of this affair, I find nothing very worthy of blame except the innumerable artifices she employed.

The dauphin (afterwards the unfortunate Louis XVI.) had just been married; the marriage of Monsieur was spoken of, and M. de Puisieux asked from the king the promise of a place for me as lady of honour to the future princess. The king promised, the Marechal d'Etrée returned thanks, and I received the usual compliments on such occasions. My aunt made this an excuse to be presented at court, where she had never been, though her birth gave her the privilege; but M. de Montesson would not allow it. She said, that, since I was destined by the situation promised me, to spend the greater part of my life at Versailles, she wished to go to court to see me oftener. This was done at the beginning of November, on my arrival in Paris, and long before what I have been stating. I went the day my aunt was presented, and was highly amused, for it was the very same day on which Madame du Barri was presented. We found her in all quarters, splendidly and tastefully attired. In day-light, her face had lost all expression,

and her complexion was spoiled by red-coloured stains. Her carriage was disgustingly impudent, and her features far from handsome; but she had beautiful fair hair, pretty teeth, and a pleasing physiognomy. She looked extremely well in the evening. We reached the evening card tables a few minutes before her. At her entrance, all the ladies near the door rushed forward in an opposite direction, so as not to be seated near her, so that, betwixt her and the last lady in the room, there was an interval of more than four or five empty places. She looked with the utmost coolness at this marked and singular movement, and nothing disturbed her unalterable impudence. When the king appeared at the end of the games, she looked to him with a smile, his eyes rolled round the room in quest of her, but he seemed in ill humour, and almost instantly retired. Public indignation was altogether unbounded at Versailles, for never had any thing so openly indecent been heretofore displayed, not even the triumphs of Madame de Pompadour. It was certainly very strange to see the *Marquise de Pompadour* at court, while her husband, *M. le Normant d'Etoiles*, was only a farmer-general; but it was infinitely more abominable to see a common prostitute pompously presented to the whole of the royal family. This, and many other instances of unparalleled indecency, powerfully assisted

in degrading royalty in France, and, consequently, contributed to bring about the revolution.

We must go back to my aunt and the Duke of Orleans. The latter sincerely believed in the *two years'* delay, and saw nothing very pressing in the steps necessary to be taken with the king; he reckoned on not being called on to do any thing for a long time, but my aunt told him that it was absolutely necessary he should have the consent safely deposited in his pocket-book. Before taking this step, the duke confessed he had fears he had never displayed till now, and said, he was sure the king would not be favourable to his proposal, and, in fact, would positively refuse his consent. She maintained the contrary, and said, that when the king learned that the Duc de Chartres had *highly approved* of the private marriage, and his consent was strongly solicited by the Duke of Orleans, he could not possibly refuse. She thus made the duke answerable for the result; and this ought always to be done when an important commission is entrusted to persons of weak mind, or of an indolent and sluggish disposition. Terribly afraid of my aunt's reproaches and ill-humour, the duke became determined out of sheer timidity. In fact, the king refused him very angrily at first, but when he insisted with much animation to obtain his object, he succeeded, after a long conversation, in ob-

taining his *written consent*, under the conditions that my aunt should not change her name, should never appear at court, and should claim none of the rights of a princess of the blood.

The duke returned in triumph to Paris, where we expected him with the utmost impatience. His look, at his arrival, announced such distinguished success, that I believe my aunt expected something a great deal better than had actually taken place. She had herself proposed the conditions; yet, when the duke enumerated the whole, I saw she was completely disappointed. Ambitious views make fancy take wilder flights even than love itself. Bernard, following Tasso, says that love

Desire tout, pretend peu, n'ose rien.*

But in sober prose, we may justly assert that ambition *desires every thing, aspires after every thing, dares every thing*.

My aunt was thoughtful and absent the whole of the day. She told me in the evening, that if the duke had known how to profit by the king's good will, he would have obtained the public declaration of his marriage, with the single condition of her not appearing at court, that she might not have precedence of the princesses of the blood, as she had a

* Brama assai, poco spera, nulla chiede.

right to have. Mentioning the duke, she spitefully said—*Every thing must be hammered into him.*

The duke thought Madame de Montesson's ill-humour a proof of strong sensibility, and nothing occurred to disturb his satisfaction. When we three were together, he never called me by any other name than his *niece,* and this title he did me the honour of giving me in three or four notes which he addressed to me. But here ended my duties as a confident. My aunt formed a plan she did not wish to entrust to me, and the particulars of what I am about to relate, I obtained solely from her other confidents, the Vicomte de La Tour du Pin and Monsigny, to whom the Duke of Orleans told all his secrets.

Madame de Montesson never intended seriously to wait two years; and the written promise she had given the Duc de Chartres had no effect on her plans. She had particularly warned the Duke of Orleans not to mention this circumstance to the king, for this single fact would have shown that the Duc de Chartres had only consented with regret to his father's marriage. After some hasty reflections, she told the duke that the king's consent was nothing, if he delayed to make use of it, that Louis XIV. had broken the promise he gave to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and that still greater dangers might arise during such a long interval. The duke displayed a

well-founded fear of his son's displeasure; but she answered that she would take every precaution to conceal the secret from him, and at length it was settled that a private marriage should be concluded immediately. The archbishop was shown the king's consent, and it was he who gave them the nuptial blessing privately, in his chapel, at twelve o'clock at night. The witnesses were the Vicomte de la Tour du Pin and M. de Damas, the duke's chamberlains. They were pledged to secresy, which they kept for three weeks, and broke only when Madame de Montesson's vanity had told the matter to several individuals, and when she had betrayed it in a thousand ways besides.

In imitation of Madame de Maintenon, who justly considered every kind of title beneath her, and would have none after her marriage with Louis XIV. my aunt rejected the title of *Marquise* she had hitherto borne, while she ordered her servants, and requested her friends never to call her by any other name than simple Madame de Montesson. She persuaded the duke that there was great dignity in not concealing her real rank, and he caused his chamberlains to pay her the same homage as to a princess. The Duc de Chartres soon learned the truth, and as he was himself incapable of breaking his word, his anger was great; he had an interview with his father, in which he displayed so much indig-

nation and resentment, that he put his father in a passion, and they were a fortnight without seeing each other. Madame de Montesson thought that nobody could resist her insinuating talents, and obtained a private interview with the Duc de Chartres. She displayed abundance of fine feeling that was all to no purpose, and then endeavoured to show him that their *common interest* required their union; but the duke always replied with the most provoking coolness that he would always think it inexcusable for any one to give his word of honour voluntarily, and then break it in every point. He added, that such conduct destroyed every idea of future confidence, and on leaving her, said he should always preserve her written engagement, to which he would merely add an *historical note*. This he actually did; and though the note did not contain those insults or defamatory reflections attributed to it, it was sufficiently satirical. Hence arose Madame de Montesson's violent resentment against the Duc de Chartres, which had a very fatal influence over the destiny of that unfortunate prince.

I am anticipating events, for the Duke of Orleans did not marry my aunt till a month after my entry into the Palais Royal; but since I have already broken the order of time, I shall now finish all I have to say concerning the consequences of their marriage. The duke was very sorry at his son's

displeasure, and told his deep chagrin to the faithful Monsigny, whom he justly esteemed, and who, under pretence of receiving orders for the duties connected with his office, had long interviews with him every morning, when the duke showed more confidence in him than he did in the most important individuals connected with his household. Monsigny went often also to visit my aunt, who required him to assist in repeating music; on leaving her he went to the duke, who always kept him to have some conversation. When setting out for Villers-Coterets, whither we were to go in eight days, the duke desired Monsigny to intimate to me, that if I could engage the Duc de Chartres to be reconciled to my aunt, and to treat her affectionately, she would settle the estate of Sainte-Assise upon my children, along with her splendid house in Paris, the whole of which might be worth from seventy to eighty thousand livres a year. Next morning, Monsigny called, and gave me a note from the duke, merely desiring me *to believe implicitly whatever should be said in his name, and to perform with zeal all he expected from my attachment towards him, and which he merited by his sincere and ardent friendship.* He ended by asking for my answer in writing, which Monsigny would bring to Villers-Coterets three days after his arrival. Monsigny then told me all. This statement, I mean the proposal of this bargain, greatly hurt me, and I was

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was highly offended at such stupid conduct on the part of the duke. I considered it a personal insult, and time has not changed my opinion; but I was indignant, and my reply but too clearly displayed it. My first impressions and feelings have always been kind and generous, but the vivacity of my ideas, and the liveliness of my imagination, have always mingled with my best actions, something lofty, violent, and even extravagant, that has diminished their value, and has been, (must, in fact, have been,) exceedingly injurious to my interest and happiness. When greatness of mind alone prompts to a good action, calmness and simplicity predominate in the manner; but when vanity interferes with this sublime feeling, an unnatural display is given to its operation, and the whole is destroyed. I answered the Duke of Orleans in a way that was not only not suitable to his rank, but that was really impertinent. After beginning, properly enough, my letter went on to say that I did not know any right I had to influence the mind of the Duc de Chartres; that, at any rate, he wanted no extraneous aid to show his respect and attachment to his father. But after disdainfully rejecting the very rude offer of securing me my aunt's inheritance, I added this phrase; *I would not consider as lawful, nor would I accept, any part of my aunt's property, except the family inheritance.* I could not have said any thing more severe if my aunt

had been the mistress of the Duke of Orleans; instead of that she had become his wife with the king's consent, and had been married by the archbishop of Paris! But though she was really the Duchess of Orleans, she could not assume the title; and I felt that in her place, with no rank to sustain, I should have gloried in being satisfied with forty thousand livres a year; should have refused all the extravagant gifts of the duke, two hundred thousand livres a year, and a splendid mansion, built for her besides in the Chausseé d'Antin, diamonds, plate, and other valuables. Madame de Maintenon would accept of nothing from Louis XIV., but my aunt was governed by different feelings, was excessively proud and avaricious; and so indignant was I at her extravagance and cupidity, that my dislike at her conduct assisted me not a little in making out a letter in so arrogant a tone. I firmly resolved that this letter, which I thought quite sublime, should never be employed in increasing my credit with the Duke of Chartres, and I faithfully kept my resolution, though there was little merit in doing so, for he thought so little of people showing themselves off, and not acting from principle, that I would have lost his esteem had I boasted of this action, which it was also my duty to conceal from him, to prevent him becoming more and more irritated at his father. Hence, he never had the least idea of the subject. Desirous, however, of having a respect-

able witness of my conduct on this occasion, I showed the letter to the Duchess of Chartres, having first made her give me her word of honour, that she would never say a word on the subject to the duke; and I knew that I could place implicit reliance on her word. This princess is six years younger than me, and should naturally survive me; she must certainly remember a fact that so greatly surprised her at the time.

The Duke of Orleans and my aunt were enraged at my letter, and neither of them ever pardoned it, yet, without expecting any result, all my cares were devoted, along with those of the duchess, to soften the Duke of Chartres. He had declared he would never again set foot in Madame de Montesson's house; yet he returned to it, and during several years, supped there twice or three times every winter. This behaviour (which I venture to say, he never would have shown without my exertions) ought to have sufficed, for it was just and reasonable, but did not at all satisfy my aunt, who wished to be followed by admirers and flatterers. It is true, that the Duc de Chartres was not very fond of the coquetry and affectionate displays she occasionally played off before him. She irritated his father more and more against him. Meanwhile, she was continually complaining of him to her confidential friends, never mentioning a single positive instance, but sighing and using am-

biguous language, so that her hearers might think what they pleased; this was her plan. It was thus she always made her complaints of me in a most sentimental tone, but without being able to bring forward a single incorrect proceeding. But the greatest fault of the Duc de Chartres was, that he never had even the semblance of wrong in his conduct towards her; not even when his friend, M. de Fitz-James, among the rest, gave him notice that she took every opportunity of abusing his character and conduct.* The most fatal prepossessions ever formed against this unfortunate prince, were raised by her machinations. Her resentment was so violent, that many have thought it could only have arisen from a strong sentiment in his favour having been disdained; but this, I believe, to be wholly untrue. The Duc de Chartres was not a *Hippolyte,* nor did my aunt resemble *Phedre,* for she was only vehement in her self-love. To all this hatred, the duke opposed nothing but calmness, patience, and indifference. The two facts I am about to mention, I witnessed myself, as well as every one at the Palais Royal. One day at dinner, we perceived that the silver covers were all different, and every one recognized his own arms on some of them. The duke asked the comptroller,

* The Duke of Fitz-James was grandson of the celebrated Marshal Berwick, natural son of the Duke of York, afterwards James II. of England.—(*Editor.*)

Joli,* what was the meaning of this, and in reply, he whispered something into his ear. After dinner, the duke told us that all the plate had been carried off to Sainte-Assise by order of the Duke of Orleans, because Madame de Montesson's *were sent to the jewellers* to be altered, as they were old-fashioned. It is true, that the plate at the Palais Royal belonged to the Duke of Orleans, but this was an odd way of disposing of it without notice. One morning the winter after, orders came to take away from the Duke and Duchess of Chartres all the diamonds called the family jewels, for the purpose of adorning a velvet dress, in which Madame de Montesson appeared several times during the winter. Such conduct was highly indecorous, yet the Duke of Chartres bore it with admirable patience and good temper.

I had several private griefs of my own before I left my residence in the Rue Saint Dominique. The one that affected me most was the death of my kind and beloved grandmother, the Marquise de Droménil, for this worthy lady was really so in my affection and grateful remembrance. She was eighty-six years of age, yet I bewailed her as if I could have expected to preserve her much longer. In her will, she made made no dispositions in favour of any of her grand-

* This Joli (a very worthy man) was the father of the pleasing and talented actor of that name, so deservedly popular at present. —(*Note by the Author.*)

children in particular, but she left me the estate of Bouleuse, near Rheims, with a fine country-house, worth seven thousand livres a year. She added this clause: "In making this gift to the Comtesse de Genlis, I wish, on account of the affection I bear towards her, to be interred in the parish church of the estate." This will, so kind and honourable to me, was of no benefit, for it was set aside by M. de Noailles, the husband of Madame de Droménil's grand-daughter. It had been drawn up by a notary, but there was some error in form, and M. de Noailles litigated the question, and gained it. It was this M. de Noailles who afterwards paid my marriage settlement, that is to say, a hundred and twenty thousand francs, by giving two thousand francs' worth of *assignats to the nation*. M. de Genlis only obtained, like Madame de Noailles and Madame de Belzunce, his own portion, and we lost altogether the estate of Bouleuse, which, independent of right, had been bequeathed to me; but I always preserved the same grateful feeling for the donor, and Madame de Droménil will ever live in my remembrance as a mother and a benefactress.

At this time occurred an incident which shows the great utility of M. Tissot's book *(Avis au peuple sur sa santé)*. We kept in the house an Italian abbé, who read Tasso with me, was an excellent musician, and played extremely well on the piano. On return-

ing home one evening we were told that he was dangerously ill of the *cholera-morbus,* and that the physician he had sent for (a M. Soulier) had prescribed wine and treacle mixed together. As I had often practised medicine at Genlis, and even at Sillery, I knew M. Tissot's book by heart, and said I was sure that it condemned such a prescription. We took the book, and saw with great alarm, that M. Tissot said it was sometimes given by ignorant physicians, but that it was the same thing *as firing a pistol at the patient's head.* It is wonderful that a physician should be so brutally ignorant, and should not have read Tissot. But such was the case; the poor abbé called for the sacraments, and took extreme unction at ten o'clock that night. M. de Genlis and I were present. He died half an hour afterwards. I was so struck with his look, that I told M. de Genlis I could not think of passing the night under the same roof, and he agreed to let me go to sleep at the house of Madame de Balincour. Horses were put to the carriage, and I set off immediately. The family of M. de Balincour were delighted though surprised at seeing me, and he gave me up his own room, where I went to bed at half past twelve o'clock. I had fallen asleep in a few minutes, but was wakened by the merry voice of M. de Balincour, who had entered my room in the dark (for I kept no light in my room at night), and was singing a very gay and laughable

couplet to the air of *La Baronne,* while I heard the whispering of five or six persons who had glided in likewise. As we never forget what has highly amused us, I recollect perfectly the whole of the couplet:—

Dans mon alcove
Je m'arracherai les cheveux, (bis)
Je sens que je deviendrai chauve
Si je n'obtiens ce que je veux
Dans mon alcove.

After a moment's reflection, I replied by the following impromptu, to the same tune—but to understand it, I ought to mention that M. de Balincour had nearly lost all his hair:—

Dans votre alcove,
Moderez l'ardeur de vos feux
Car enfin pour devenir chauve
Il faudrait avoir des cheveux
Dans votre alcove.

My reply caused a general laugh, and delighted them greatly. When lights were brought, Madame de Balincour and Madame de Ranché, her husband's sister, a handsome, charming woman, rushed towards my bed, while M. de Balincour and the rest of the company formed a circle round it. We conversed, and said a thousand amusing things till three in the morning, when M. de Balincour went out, and came back in a moment dressed like a pastry-cook, with a large basket full of sweetmeats, fruits, and preserves.

We kept up the frolic till five in the morning, for M. de Balincour detained us more than half an hour in proposing all kinds of amusements, as violins, magic lanterns, and puppet-shows; but at last they allowed me to sleep, which I did till twelve o'clock, and was only awakened by further tricks on the part of M. de Balincour. When M. de Genlis came for me, he was also detained, and they would not let us go for five whole days. M. de Genlis entered fully into M. de Balincour's views, wrote twenty couplets of songs, and dressed in all kinds of characters; while we had balls, went to the theatres, to the fair, the *halle*, played at childish games, had concerts, and enjoyed an uninterrupted series of amusements. Never were five days so noisily spent in the course of my life. The Marechal de Balincour and the Marechal de Biron witnessed our lively doings, and were highly amused. The Marechal de Biron was seventeen or eighteen years younger than M. de Balincour, and was about seventy years of age, though he did not appear to be more than fifty-five. His height was majestic, his shape very fine, and his look stern and noble. Brutus was said to be the last of the Romans; and the marshal might be said to be *the last fanatic of royalty* in France, for he never gave a thought to politics or forms of government in the course of his life. His real vocation lay in making a figure at court, in being decorated with a blue ribbon, in speaking with

grace and dignity to a king, in being acquainted with, and in feeling the different degrees of respect to be paid to the sovereign and the princes of the blood, and the attentions due to a man of quality, as well as the dignified manner appropriate to a man of high rank. All his fine taste, all his knowledge of etiquette, all his graces, would have been destroyed by the system of equality. He worshipped the king, because he was king; he might have said what Montaigne said of his friend la Boetie, *I love him because I love him, because he is what he is, and I am what I am.* The marshal, in different language, gave the same explanation of his strong attachment to the king. It was most amusing, even then, to hear him speaking of republics, for he considered republicans as a sort of barbarians. In other respects he was a man of great good sense, of an upright and open disposition, evidently marked in his fine features, had shown the most distinguished gallantry in war, and was adored by the *Gardes Francaises,* whose colonel he was.

One day, that the marshals of the name of Biron were talked of in his presence, he said—"You count one too many, for you should not reckon the one who was unfaithful to his king." He was fond of young ladies, and bore himself towards them with a chivalrous gallantry, that gave one an idea of that of the

court of Louis XIV., the last moments of which he had seen in early youth. He paid much respect to the Marechal de Balincour, who could boast of an earlier acquaintance with it, and speaking of him one day, he said with a feeling of admiration: "*At the late king's death he was thirty years of age!*" This was high praise from him. I felt infinite delight in hearing these two worthy veterans conversing together; and when the Marquis de Canillac, who was ninety-one years of age, was along with them, I thought myself really transported to the age of Louis XIV. with which the Marechal de Richelieu had already made me acquainted while we were at Braisne. Hence arose my strong admiration of the court of Louis XIV. even in early youth, and this feeling was increased by my subsequent studies. If I have been able to describe that brilliant court, it was because I knew it well. I was very fond of the marechal, not only because he was constantly sending me presents of figs, nectarines, and flowers, out of his princely garden, but because I obtained much instruction from his conversation.

I again read the *Letters* of *Madame de Sevigné*, and those of *Madame de Maintenon*, the *Souvenirs* of *Madame du Caylus*, and the *Memoirs* of *Cardinal Retz*. One never tires of reading them. How people loved, thought, wrote, and conversed in those times!

What wit, judgment, unaffectedness, grace, lofty sentiments, and unostentatious feeling! How *French* we were in those days! . . . .

I left my amiable and beloved friends after enjoying a fund of amusement, and yet returned to the Rue St. Dominique with joy, for I had need of writing, reading, thinking, silence, and repose. The house I left so brilliant and so gay, was in a few days filled with sorrow, for the good old Marechal de Balincour fell ill. I immediately went back to join my friends in their affliction. They lost a revered uncle, and a deservedly beloved benefactor. His death was equally happy and affecting; but I have mentioned the particulars of it in my *Souvenirs*. We had a great many family losses to deplore in the course of this year. The Marechal d'Etrée was dying of a lingering complaint, that had long afflicted him, and which was incurable. He lay on a sofa, and daily received the visits of his relations and friends; conversation and amusement went on as if he had been in perfect health. He did not see the whole extent of his danger, for the length of time he had suffered from the complaint, made him think it was noways dangerous. At the death of M. de Balincour, I went every evening to the house of the Marechal d'Etrée, who showed me great kindness. I was painfully surprised at seeing the gradual extinction of a great man, covered with glory, full of

honour, and at the summit of earthly grandeur and respect. Methought all the brilliant attributes that rendered his life illustrious, should have secured its duration; and yet these numerous friends, this high fortune, this pomp and loftiness, all were about to disappear! On reaching his house one evening, I found all the family in dismay, for he was near his end, and had called for the last sacraments, which he received with great devotion, for he had always been religiously inclined. The same evening he breathed his last, and left a memory illustrious, by a life without a stain, by great actions, an excellent disposition, and lofty talents, as a statesman and a warrior.

At this time, Monsieur and Madame de Puisieux wished us to reside with them, and gave us a pretty *entresol* in the splendid house they occupied in the Rue de Grenelle. From honourable motives, I had given up the situation promised me in the household of Madame. The king decided that none of these places should be given to ladies who did not visit Madame du Barri. It may be imagined that this decision was not formally announced, but it was fully acted upon. Several persons on the list of candidates received notice of the decision, and this was called being invited to join the *king's private parties*. For myself, no intimation was given me, but we learned on all hands that most of the persons

selected had paid visits to Madame du Barri. They were admitted the moment they sent for an invitation. M. de Genlis was noways disposed to bid me take such a step, which no power, in fact, could have forced me to do. His relations thought the same; but as the places at court were granted only under this condition, I obtained none, notwithstanding the king's solemn promise. Had I obtained this place, my lot would have been very different! I would most certainly have followed the princess, to whose household I was attached; the king, in the leisure moments of his exile, might, perhaps, have distinguished me; I should have been placed in a noble and secure asylum, sheltered from the shafts of calumny, and the hazards of imprudence. How many toils and chagrins I should have been spared! This pure, honourable, and peaceful lot was denied me, because Louis XV. allowed absolute dominion over his own mind, and over the court, to be impudently usurped by a stale and senseless public prostitute!

I forgot to mention a very remarkable individual, whom I constantly saw at M. de Puisieux's, namely, the Abbé Raynal. Never did there exist a man of talent so insupportably obstinate, so disputatious, or so unamiable in society. I have heard him disputing with the Marechal d'Etrée on military tactics, and with a pertness and positive tone altogether indescribable. One evening, the Marechal ended the

discussion by telling him, "You are perfectly right, Monsieur l'Abbé—I see you understand these things much better than I do." Another time I had been playing on the harp, and he wished to pester me with endless questions about the mechanism of pedal ones; but Madame de Puisieux came to my assistance. and broke off his harangue, by telling him, "Spare us a useless dissertation, Monsieur l'Abbé, for Madame de Genlis is perfectly aware that you are qualified to teach her the harp." He had not yet written his *Histoire Philosophique des Indes*,* and if that heavy, pedantic, and dangerous work had actually been published, I should have felt very great contempt and disgust at being seated beside the old libertine and apostate, who has drawn the licentious picture of the *bagaderes* with such apparent pleasure, and has had the impiety to write those atrocious words: *Nations of the earth, do you wish*

* *The Philosophical and Political History of the Commerce and Settlements of Europeans in the East and West Indies*, did not appear till the beginning of the year 1772. It was printed at Nuten, in six volumes octavo, and, though anonymous, was immediately attributed to the Abbé Raynal. Another edition appeared in 1774, which was also sold publicly. When the book was condemned by a decree of the parliament of Paris, and the author ordered to be imprisoned, (May 25, 1781,) Raynal fled into Germany. The Abbé Raynal was born at St. Genica, in Rouergue, in 1713, and died at Passy, in 1796, leaving nothing but an *assignat* for fifty francs, worth *five sous.—(Note by the Editor.)*

for happiness? Overthrow every throne and every altar. He has been since obeyed—he saw the result, for it was a just retribution, and he repented. But his recantation, so disgraceful to the cause of philosophy, was not sufficiently humble to satisfy religion, which he had so grossly insulted. I likewise saw at M. de Puisieux's the young King of Sweden,* then on his first travels out of his own dominions, for he afterwards went to Spa. He was agreeable, accomplished, obliging, and conversed very gracefully.

A lady, who became rich and fashionable in her old age, but who had been neither the one nor the other at thirty-seven, sometimes visited Madame de

* The crown prince of Sweden, afterwards known by the name of Gustavus III., learned while at Paris, in the beginning of the year 1771, the death of his father, Frederic Adolphus. Gustavus, at a supper, once defended Voltaire against the Marechal de Broglie, which the patriarch of Ferney soon learned by the Prussian ambassador, M. d'Argental, and replied in the following verses:

On dit que je tombe en jeunesse;
Tâchez de me bien elever,
Ne ponrriez-vous pas me trouver
Quelqu' accès près de son altesse?
De vieux héros, de vieux savans
Prende ont de ses lecons, peutêtre;
Je veux m'instruire, il en est temps:
C'est à moi de chercher mon maitre.

(*Note by the Editor.*

Puisieux. Madame de Coaslin had a grave look, and a slow pedantic mode of expressing herself, which formed a striking contrast to the vulgarity of her language, and the droll stories she always mixed up with her conversation. Her style of writing was ridiculous, and she was not clever, but she was handsome, and had a stern look. A satirical turn, and a bold manner, made her be noticed, and gave her a certain gloss of original humour. The Prince de Conti gave a supper every Monday in the Temple, to which such crowds resorted, that there was always present more than a hundred and fifty persons. To reach the prince, it was necessary to pass through an immense saloon, betwixt three rows of gentlemen, who stood up previous to the supper, as none but the ladies were in the circle at the foot of the hall. One evening, when the crowd was even greater than usual, the Prince de Conti saw Madame de Coaslin coming up, and advancing towards her, he said, with an ironical tone, that with her *natural timidity* she must have been greatly embarrassed in the midst of such a crowd. "Yes, Monseigneur," replied Madame de Coaslin, "I was so frightened, that I entirely lost my recollection, and in my confusion—actually curtsied to Monsieur," pointing to a gentleman she disliked, and who had written some very satirical verses upon her.

At this time I frequently saw the beautiful Com-

tesse de Brione, who was now not very young, but of a majestic look that was still very remarkable; but when we have mentioned her person, her portrait is finished—no more can be added. She came to M. de Puisieux's very often to supper, along with the famous Prince Louis, afterwards Cardinal de Rohan. Prince Louis had an agreeable person, manners rather too spruce for his profession, frivolous, lively and witty conversation, but nothing that he ought to have been, though he was as pleasing as a person can be out of his proper place and character. His hastiness, thoughtlessness, carriage, and conversation, showed nothing but the wildness of his youth, and foretold, for his after life, nothing but blunders, misfortune, and disgrace.

A short time after the death of the Marechal d'Etrée, we lost another friend still dearer to us. M. de Puisieux was attacked by inflammation of the chest, and died on the fifth day, (of his illness.) He was one of the most honourable men of his time. The most scrupulous delicacy was only common honesty in his eyes. Never did any one enjoy a higher character for uprightness and integrity. He was a knight of the order of the Holy Ghost, ambassador in Switzerland, Sweden, and Naples, and afterwards minister for foreign affairs. When he retired from the ministry, the king required him still to remain in the privy council. As umpire, he

...RAJA SERFOJI'S...

decided an immense number of law-suits between the courtiers, who were continually asking his advice. The Marechal d'Etrée said of him, that he was the judge of the point of honour in thorny disputes. He enjoyed the unbounded confidence of the most virtuous of princes, the Duke of Penthievre, and it was he who persuaded him to give his only daughter, the richest heiress in the kingdom, (since the death of the Prince de Lamballe,) to the Duke of Chartres. The Duke of Orleans acknowledged that he was indebted to him for it. M. de Puisieux showed great devotion at his death. He had been educated among the jesuits, and after his death marks were found on his breast of his being admitted into the order, a secret he never told any one, and which none of his servants knew. This admission (*affiliation*) was obtained by the following formality: the party took an oath to do every thing in his power for the maintenance of religion; to protect the order itself, and all its members, whenever this protection should be claimed, or become necessary, and at the same time be not injurious to morality nor the laws; to say every day a certain prayer, which was very short; to wear a scapulary constantly on the breast, as a mark of affiliation; and lastly, to keep the secret of their affiliation, which was authorized by the pope. On the other hand, the person affiliated was promised all the services and proofs of affection

that could be of use to him in any country, or in any situation; finally, he participated in all the prayers put up for the members of the order, and in all the indulgences granted by the pope.

The decease of that worthy and respectable master of a family, M. de Puisieux, plunged us all into the deepest affliction; but a still greater emotion was produced by the death of his virtuous sister, Mademoiselle de Sillery. She had tended and watched her brother, without leaving him one moment, during the five days of his illness. When she had received his last sigh, she took to her bed, called for the sacraments next morning, and died in six days afterwards.

I was long shut up with Madame de Puisieux, solely occupied in consoling her, and in taking care of her health, which this severe trial had greatly injured. During her mourning, her seclusion was complete, for she saw none but her own family for some months, and went nowhere but to church. At the end of this period, she would not go to see the illuminations, nor the fire-works displayed on the Place Louis XV., in honour of the dauphin's marriage, but she sent me to see them. M. de Genlis had just set out for his regiment, and I went to see the fire-works with the Marquise de Brugnon, a charming lady, whose husband was in the navy, and had been sent as ambassador to Morocco, which

gave me a high opinion of him, for I thought the embassy much more dangerous than a sea-fight.

M. de la Reynière was building a fine house in the Place Louis XV. and gave me one of the apartments on the ground floor, to look at the fire-works. As we were told there would be a terrible crowd, I went thither immediately after dinner, along with Madame de Brugnon, and Messieurs de Nedonchel and de Bouzolle. We reached the house without difficulty, but waited much longer than we expected, so that I began to fret, and said, I had no longer any wish to see the fire-works, nor would look at them at all. They thought I was jesting, and playfully challenged me to do so, which I solemnly maintained I would. I closed my eyes when the first rocket was discharged, and nothing could make me open them as long as the fire-works lasted. When they were over, Messieurs de Bouzolle and de Nedonchel left us to look for the servants, and to call the carriage. They did not come back till twelve o'clock, which greatly alarmed us, but we were still more so, when we heard a horrible tumult in the place. The gentlemen returned at last; they would not tell us that the crowd in the place were tumbling and trampling over each other, and that every thing was in a dreadful state of confusion; but they said they had encountered shocking difficulties, and that we must wait, at least, two hours longer. They brought us a

pullet which they had got, along with some cakes, at a *restaurateur's*, but just as we were going to take supper, we heard groans under our windows. They came from two old ladies, the Marquise d'Albert and the Comtesse de Renti, formerly maid of honour to the late Princesse de Condé. These ladies, in going for their carriage, had been borne along by the crowd, and separated from their servants. We took them in;—but, as we could not get round the house to let them in by the door, we lifted them up through the window, which fortunately was not very high, though we effected this not without great difficulty, on account of their hoop-petticoats, and the terror they were in. The amusement which this produced, instantly vanished on seeing the neck of Madame d'Albert covered with blood, which was caused by one of her ear-rings having been snatched from her in the crowd.

We remained till two o'clock in the morning, for the two ladies could find neither their carriage nor their servants, and I was forced to take them home, so that I did not return to the Hotel de Puisieux till a quarter after three. I found all the household up, and dreadfully alarmed. They thought I was killed, for they knew, which I did not, that an immense number of individuals had perished in the fatal place, (about six thousand persons, according to the most moderate calculation.) Madame de Puisieux, in

tears, came to the top of the stairs to receive me with inexpressible delight, for she had learned all the disasters of that fatal night. These were produced by small shallow trenches along the Place Louis XV. which the crowd, in pressing forward, had not seen, and had tumbled into; those behind them fell over them, trampled them to death, or stifled them. For the first time since she had become a widow, Madame de Puisieux had that evening supped out, with Madame de Egmont. Close to the Hotel d'Egmont was a guard-house, adjoining the Place Louis XV. and thither was brought an immense quantity of bodies, which were fruitlessly attempted to be restored to life. Thus Madame de Puisieux learned the horrible catastrophe. The next day was a day of desolation, particularly to workmen and the lower classes, for scarcely any one, in this walk of life, had not a misfortune to deplore. Milot, the *maitre d'hotel* of Madame de Puisieux, lost a cousin; my waiting-maid went to the *morgue* to recognize the body of her sister, a young girl of twenty, apprenticed to a furrier. Every one of our acquaintance related similar accidents; and during four or five days nothing was thought of in conversation but the horrible catastrophe, which every one considered as a very bad omen. In fact, it is very remarkable, that at the marriage of the unfortunate Louis XVI. so much blood should have been shed on the very spot where

that prince himself, his wife, and so many other innocent victims were afterwards to be put to death! . . .

After this event, we resided eight months longer with Madame de Puisieux, and the following winter I experienced one of the deepest afflictions I ever suffered. Madame de Custines had gone to an estate of her mother-in-law's in Lorraine, and returned at the end of autumn alone, as business detained her husband in the country till the month of January, I went daily to see her on her return, and found her altered and looking very poorly. As she had a cough I was alarmed for her health, and went every morning to breakfast at her house, where I remained from ten till two, and then left her to dine with Madame de Puisieux. Her brother-in-law, the Viscount de Custines, was almost always along with her, and greatly embarrassed me; but as Madame de Custines had no idea of his conduct towards me, and I never was accustomed to tell those things, I did not show my thoughts on the subject. She thought only that I did not like her brother, and had several times wondered at me for doing so, and spoke highly of his disposition and moral qualities. She knew the report that had been spread abroad, that he had gone off suddenly to Corsica only to please me, but she declared it was not true, and that the viscount, she was sure, had no pretension that could give me any

offence. I took care not to tell the real state of things, and only replied that there was something ironical and severe in his manner and conversation which I did not like. She told me again and again that I was mistaken in my opinion, but I allowed her to think so, for I did not wish to injure the esteem and friendship she felt for him, and I saw that he had given her a very false account of his conduct towards me.

One morning, on going as usual to see Madame de Custines at ten o'clock, I found her so altered and unwell, that I prevailed on her to go to bed. The viscount sent for a doctor, who came immediately, and said she was very feverish. When he left the room, we followed him to ask his opinion, and he struck me with anguish by saying, he was afraid she was attacked by inflammation of the chest. I resolved on stopping all day. The doctor told us in the evening, that it really was an inflammation of the chest. I then took up my abode in her house, along with one of her relations, a lady, determined like me, on sitting up with her, and in not leaving her as long as she should be in danger. The viscount remained along with us, and his behaviour greatly affected me, for it was perfectly appropriate; he did not say one word that could remind me of the sentiments I had forbid him ever to mention in my presence. He displayed the utmost fondness for his sister-in-law, and all his attention was devoted to her. He dispatched

a courier to his brother ; but, as he was a hundred leagues distant, we knew that he could not arrive before we should either be without fears or without hopes! . . . .

From the very first, Madame de Custines was in the utmost danger, and on the third day M. Tronchin was called in, and he gave her up. She was fully aware of her own danger, asked for and received all the sacraments with heavenly piety and resignation. She preserved her recollection to the last. Several times she pressed us to go to bed; and perceiving that we were determined on sitting up, she gave orders that during the night cooling draughts should be prepared for us, along with lemonade and orgeat; she likewise ordered biscuit and oranges to be kept in the *salon*. All this she ordered with a coolness and unbroken attention that claimed our admiration. There was but one couch in the *salon*, and she wished there had been another, that we might all three repose comfortably. On the second day, she requested me to read some religious books to her, and asked me first to read the *Quatre fins de l'homme* of Nicole, pointing out the passage on death we had often talked of together, and which we thought the best ever written on that subject; but she hesitated, and told me, "No, that would give you pain, read the *Imitation*." In a word, she maintained her admirable disposition to the last. On the fourth day of her

illness she passed a very bad night, her cough and violent pains were incessant, but her patience and resignation were unalterable. She sent for her confessor at two o'clock, and at three received extreme unction. The fifth day of her illness was beginning, and M. Tronchin, whom we had called up, came at half-past three. He ordered a soothing draught, and when I left the room, I had not the courage to ask his opinion, for I knew too well that all hope must be abandoned! At four o'clock I went for a moment into the *salon*, to breathe a little freely, that is to say, to weep without constraint, The Viscount de Custine was there and in tears; I sat down beside him, and we shed torrents of tears for more than an hour without uttering a single word; in these sorrowful moments I really loved him. Every thing becomes sympathetic with two persons afflicted with the same grief, and as long as it continnes, those who weep and deplore their mutual loss have their souls united in the closest and most affecting harmony. At five o'clock I again went into the room of my unfortunate friend. I found her much quieter, and at six o'clock she told me that she no longer suffered any pain. I looked at her; she was pale, but there was no part of her features altered or fallen in, and I was even so much struck with her beauty, that I went to bring the viscount, who had remained in the *salon*; in fact, we could not help feeling the

revival of our hopes. It was Sunday, and at eight o'clock Madame de Custines asked me to read the mass aloud, and pressed me to go to church, as she said she felt perfectly well. I even thought so myself; she embraced me, and made her favourite book of *Hours* be brought in, and gave it to me with these words: "*Keep it always!*" The words made me shudder! I left her, and had scarcely gone a few steps when she said—"*Pray to God for me!*" These were the last words I heard her pronounce! I went to mass, returned in three quarters of an hour—she was no more! She had just expired!*

* It was the lot of Madame de Custines to owe her virtues and reputation to herself alone, for on her entrance into society she had neither guide nor Mentor, as her mother-in-law resided in Lorraine; and yet without any one to counsel or direct her, she committed not a single fault, because being firm in her principles, and timid in her disposition, she never fell into an imprudent step. She had great talents, and employed them only in improving her judgment and her heart; rich, young, and beautiful as an angel, she always led a very retired life, never went to court but from duty, to the theatre but from good-nature, and never appeared at a ball. Though hasty, she was so indulgent, mild, and simple in all her habits, that her taste for retirement and strictness of life looked more like indolence than any thing else. When any one seemed to believe it, she was delighted. "I would rather," said she to her friends, "be accused of indolence than of singularity." She was not indolent as a wife, a mother, or a friend; never was more activity shown in fulfilling all her domestic duties, and in doing kind and valuable services to her friends. Madame de Custines lived six years after her

I went back to the house of Madame de Puisieux in a state of grief I cannot describe. The viscount came to spend the greatest part of the day along with me, and this was a consolation to us both! for we were both so afflicted and cast down that we could not converse together. He also came the next day, and brought along with him the charming children of her whom we deplored! I was afflicted at seeing them, and the same evening, the unfortunate Count de Custines arrived. His despair was inexpressible. He immediately hurried to see me; from that moment we swore eternal friendship, and we were both faithful to the engagement. During three weeks' time, I gave up the whole day to condole with him, with the exception of two or three hours in the evening, which I gave to Madame de Puisieux. He came every morning at ten o'clock to breakfast with M. de Genlis and me; then, if the weather permitted, we rode out together on horseback or in the carriage; on our return, the Count de Custines took us to dine with him, and we remained secluded with him till six or seven in the evening. M. de Custines gave me a portrait of his lady that was extremely like her, and likewise one of his children. He added to these a present that greatly affected me. To save me the

introduction into society, and obtained the respect and consideration given to a woman of forty whose conduct has always been irreproachably pure.—(*Note by the Author.*)

trouble of taking my harp to her house, Madame de Custines had bought one, very handsome, stained and gilt, and an excellent instrument; this the count sent to me with the key, which he had ordered to be made on purpose. The key was made of gold, enamelled in black, with these words round it—"*Never forget her!*" For seven years I carefully preserved this key, but at last it was stolen from me at Villers-Coterets, along with a diamond pin and other jewels. I determined in my own mind never to play on the harp of Madame de Custine any thing but religious music and plaintive romances. The first thing I played on it was a romance on the death of my incomparable friend, which at the same time expressed her eulogium: it was in six couplets, to the air of *Gabrielle de Vergi*—I have forgotten it, which I am sorry for, as it was very affecting. When I sang it for the first time, I could not finish even the first couplet; and the first sound I produced from the harp raised an inexpressible awe within me—it seemed to me that it was my friend herself who addressed me, and replied to me from the depths of the tomb! . . . . It is very extraordinary how faithless our impressions are, and how they are weakened and altogether effaced by habit. The very harp which I could not cast my eyes on without bursting into tears, when it was first brought;—the harp, the sounds of which had raised in me such trouble and emotion, became in after-times

a very ordinary instrument! The only impressions which do not fade away, are those that are connected with religious feelings, for they alone will survive us.

Besides the romance I have just mentioned, I wrote in the course of this year, a prose *eloge* of Madame de Custines, which I lost along with many other manuscripts. Madame de Custines died at twenty-four; she was six months older than me. She was married at seventeen, and lived seven years in society, during which period she was a model of exquisite perfection. Her life was short, but pure, irreproachable, and perfectly happy. I never saw such great beauty in a young person of such a sound judgment, strict principles and piety, joined to so much gaiety, mildness, and indulgence. She never went to balls or theatres, but thought it quite natural that her friends should go. "I am certain," said she to me, "that as you are fond of these amusements, they are not dangerous to you; but perhaps they might be so to me." When I went to a ball, I almost always took supper at her house, as she wished to see me dressed, and to preside at my toilet. For six years I lived in the greatest intimacy with her, and never perceived the slightest change in her temper. If she had lived, my lot would have been very different. As she had a complete ascendancy over me, I would never have entered the Palais Royal, which she had made me promise not to do, and which

I would most certainly have kept. Heaven took from me this dear friend and faithful guide; but if her life had been prolonged to a mature age, she would have seen her husband and son perishing on the scaffold.*

For her own private interest, Madame de Montesson was extremely desirous that I should enter the Palais Royal, and she had no occasion to employ her influence for the purpose, as the Duke of Orleans was himself desirous of it, for I pleased him, and he thought I should not be altogether useless to the furtherance of amusement during his long and frequent residence at Villers-Coterets. Besides, I had great claims to a place in the household of the Duchess of Chartres, since it was M. de Puisieux, the friend and counsellor of the Duke of Penthievre, who had persuaded him to conclude his daughter's marriage, for the character of thoughtlessness and gallantry attributed to the Duke of Chartres had given the Duke of Penthievre the greatest dislike to the alliance. By great zeal and perseverance, M. de Puisieux succeeded in persuading him. The Duke of Orleans openly

* The Count de Custines, harassed by the accusations of Marat, and the hatred of the Jacobins, was recalled from the army of the North, of which he was commander-in-chief. He was accused of treason; was condemned and put to death on the 27th of August, 1793; his son survived him only six months, and perished in the same manner on the 3rd of January, 1794.—(*Editor.*)

acknowledged the obligation. Hence, when it was well ascertained that I should not obtain the promised place in the household of the Comtesse de Provence, my aunt told me that it only depended on myself to obtain one at the Palais Royal. I mentioned it to Madame de Custines, but she was very strongly opposed to it, and mentioned her reasons, which were sound and unanswerable. She said that I ought to stay with Madame de Puisieux till her death, and she made me give her a promise that I would not enter the Palais Royal. In fact, I told my aunt that gratitude kept me fixed with Madame de Puisieux, and no more was said about the matter. Within eight months Madame de Custines died, after which I was more than three months without going into society, and only returned to it in company with my aunt, whom I had seen but very seldom since the death of my friend. She took me often to the Palais Royal, and to Raincy, which the Duke of Orleans had lately purchased. I was again spoken to concerning a place in the household of the young princess, whom I thought of a charming appearance and disposition, for never was a young princess seen so kind and good-natured. However I made no promises; but on my return to Paris, I told Madame de Puisieux, to whom I had never yet mentioned it, all that had been said to me on the subject, but I concealed one thing from her, the promise I had given

Madame de Custines, and all she had said to me against it!—But I enumerated all the advantages of this place for a person with children—regiments in the gift of the princes, and which were always given to the children or sons-in-law of the ladies of honour, the places themselves which they could give up to their daughters or daughters-in-law, the favour of the princes, &c.—Madame de Puisieux listened to me attentively, and hesitated between two contending interests—the pain of our separation on one hand, and on the other, the brilliant figure she thought I would make in a court famous for magnificence, refined taste, and splendour. Though she had been formerly reckoned the most lovely woman at court, from her wit and her unrivalled beauty; yet I am quite certain that she never displayed the same vanity in her own person, which she showed for me now—for she sacrificed to it both her own happiness and mine!-A single word from her against the proposal would have sufficed to keep me with her. I asked her advice, and said I should be wholly guided by her opinion. She replied that, for the sake of my husband and children, I ought to accept the offer. I wept, but offered no opposition.

It is with great pain that I write these details, for it is an account of one of the greatest faults of my life. I think that in Memoirs, in which the writer has not promised to give all his private history, he

may, from respect to his own character, pass over any very serious faults, unless they be intimately connected with the events he is describing; and then he must make a free confession, and not attempt to extenuate his errors. This I am going to do. I might say that I was solely governed by the interest of my children, that I made a maternal sacrifice of my own feelings and advantage: if such had been the case, heaven would have prospered the action; but God, who knows the hearts of all, knew my motives, and severely punished me, as I deserved. I certainly thought highly of the important advantages I should derive from it in establishing my children; but had I been without children, I should have equally desired the place; for I had given it up merely to increase the esteem and friendship of Madame de Custines. After her death, I lost that generous emulation which elevates the soul, and renders it capable of the noblest sacrifices. It seemed to me that no one now existed of sufficient delicacy, undeviating principle, and intimate acquaintance with my feelings, to blame in me conduct that had nothing criminal in itself. The admiration I had felt for Madame de Custines during six years, the kind of enthusiasm raised in me by her eminent virtues, had conspired to make me guided by her opinion instead of the testimony of my own conscience. In fact, I had a feeling of the same kind towards Made-

moiselle de Mars in my childhood; and have at all times given up my own views for those of the persons I truly loved. This is a kind of idolatry that may be removed by religious impressions, when those impressions are strong and well founded, but they do not always succeed; yet this dangerous idolatry never humbled my mind, for I never loved any one but from an ardent feeling of admiration, whether well founded or not; and exaggerated feelings to their utmost loftiness only because I thought it necessary to merit and preserve the attachment I inspired. I felt for Madame de Puisieux, a truly filial affection, yet I could not give her all my confidence. I disliked, as much as she did, subtlety of mind, but I loved refinement of feeling, which she had not the least idea of; and there was nothing at all romantic in her disposition, while there was a great deal of the *fanciful* in my imagination, so much so, that if I had expressed my ideas to her just as they rose in my mind, we never should have been able to understand each other, and she wonld have laughed at my folly. As she was truly sincere in all her ways, in spite of the grief she felt at our separation, she urged M. de Genlis to take the step necessary to obtain the place, and that was to ask it from the Duke of Orleans. M. de Genlis cared little about it, and declared he would not consent to let me enter the Palais Royal unless he was attached to it himself. He asked and

obtained the post of captain of the guards of the Duke of Chartres, one of the first places in the household, and worth six thousand francs, while I had the place of lady of honour, which was worth four. It was agreed that I should remain six weeks longer with Madame le Puisieux, and this interval I spent very unhappily. In my own mind I was delighted at the thought of entering this splendid court, the refinement and elegance of which had fascinated my imagination; but I could not conceal from myself that it would have been more judicious in me to have remained with Madame de Puisieux, and that in leaving her, I was not only not doing my duty, but was risking my peace of mind. Far from making me the slightest reproach, she really believed she had persuaded me to take this step, and had no doubt in her own mind that I would rather have remained with her. For the first time in my life I had been cunning and deceitful; I had been so towards her and M. de Genlis, for I pretended to be perfectly indifferent about the place, and highly chagrined, which I was not, at leaving Madame de Puisieux, and that peaceful, tranquil life, that was to be followed by so much dependence, tumult, and harassing cares. When a fault forces an individual to abandon his natural character, he suffers from it with double force. I had always been delighted with the private conversation of Madame de Puisieux hitherto, but it

was now a real punishment to me. Her caresses, confidence, and praises cut me to the heart, for I knew that I was treacherous and ungrateful, and was, consequently, sorrowful and dejected. Constant uneasiness gave me the appearance of the deepest chagrin, and the more Madame de Puisieux was affected by it, the more bitter did my feelings become.

At length came the fatal day on which I was to enter the Palais Royal! Instead of setting out at one o'clock, as I had agreed with Madame de Puisieux, I set out before she rose, for the purpose of avoiding a farewell scene, that would have torn my heart. It was with inexpressible emotion that I left that respectable mansion, where I had been so tranquil and so beloved. A thousand painful, but now useless reflections, rose in my imagination—at the age of twenty-four, I was leaving the securest and most honourable asylum, to inhabit a dangerous abode, in which I knew I should find neither friend nor guide! Hitherto courted, and generally beloved, I had seen nothing but friendship and goodwill towards me; I had not a single enemy, had never felt the ill-will of any one, and never had the semblance of a quarrel; I took a spotless character with me to the Palais Royal, and was about to enter upon a new career. I saw many snares and dangers scattered along my path, but I saw splendour, and I was carried away by vanity, curiosity, and presumption.

We are seldom ruined by great passions, for their danger is too clear, and when the disposition is naturally good, all its resources are employed against them, and it triumphs over their allurements ; but we never sufficiently distrust a crowd of little childish feelings, that seem to us totally harmless, and which gradually influence our conduct and lead us into danger. Some adopt the dangerous practice of forming their opinion, and regulating their conduct solely by what an action is by itself, and of lulling their conscience by saying that it is altogether innocent. They ought to reflect on its consequences, and seriously consider whether their situation, temper, and private feelings do not render it dangerous or improper for them, though it may be harmless to others. But when we feel an inclination for any thing, we take good care not to reckon thus, though it is the very thing that ought to be done.

I left my room at nine o'clock in the morning. I was in trepidation, and it seemed to me that I was escaping like a criminal. On the stairs, I met several of the servants, who bid me farewell with tears in their eyes ; and the worthy Milot sobbed aloud and exclaimed : "Ah ! how unhappy Madame will be when she awakes ! Oh ! *Madame la Comtesse*, why will you leave us ? You will never be loved so much any where as you have been loved here." These were his very words—they deeply affected me, and I

could only answer him with tears. I offered him my hand, and he led me to my carriage. I gave him a note to Madame de Puisieux, and departed. In driving along the street, I looked back to the house till it was out of sight. I felt that I had left in it all the tranquillity of my life, never more to be recovered. In passing by the house formerly inhabited by Madame de Custines, in the Rue de Bac, I cast my eyes on her windows, and burst into tears.

As my apartments at the Palais Royal were not ready for my reception, I stayed at first in what were called the *petits appartemens* of the regent, as that prince had actually resided in them. The decorations were still the same; the alcove of the bed-room, and all the pannels were covered with mirrors and gilt gantelopes. They were situated at the end of the large gallery, and had a private staircase and door leading to the Rue de Richelieu, by which I entered. My coachman wished to drive past a hackney-coach, on entering this street, and struck against a post; the shock was very violent, and I thought we should be overturned and crushed to pieces; I cried out, "Good God! what an omen!" but fear was all the injury I sustained. This incident completed my dejection, and I entered these apartments, which I had never seen before, with inexpressible sorrow and oppression of heart. I sat down, and looked round with disgust upon all these mirrors, and all this *boudoir* magnificence.

I reflected that this spot had been the scene of the licentious revels of the regency, and I regretted my pretty apartments in the Hotel de Puisieux. I endeavoured to dissipate my sorrow, by thinking of my new situation in the light by which it had seduced me, but it was all in vain. I could no longer consider any thing but its dependence and perils. The simple truth chilled my imagination, and rendered me inaccessible to the illusions of vanity. When the disposition is naturally good, judgment must occasionally interfere, and we must either be guided by its dictates, or punished by its reproaches.

The society of the Palais Royal was then the most brilliant and witty in Paris. Among the ladies there was the Countess de Blot, maid of honour to the princess. She was not now in the bloom of youth, but she had a very agreeable look, and elegant shape, and was very tasteful in her dress. In different situations, she was no longer the same individual. In a small unceremonious party, she was lively, unaffected, and agreeable; but when she wished to show off and dazzle the company, she became full of affectation, preached instead of conversing, and maintained the most tiresome arguments on *sensibility* and elevation of feeling. There was nothing natural or unaffected in her conversation, for she was continually falling into ridiculous exaggeration or insufferable bombast. If avarice could permit any grandeur of

mind to survive, Madame de Blot would have had lofty thoughts; but I have known few persons more interested or ambitious. She had no esteem for any thing but courtly manners, *bon ton*, and politeness, and had an extremely delicate taste in this respect, which sometimes, however, was carried to a childish excess. My other companions were, the Comtesse de Clermont-Gallerand, formerly Comtesse des Choisi, who had lately married a second husband. She had lived very unhappily with her first husband, who was killed at the battle of Minden; at his death she was young and beautiful, but without fortune, when M. de Clermont, chamberlain of the Duke of Orleans, married her against the inclination of his relatives, principally to please the duke. Madame des Choisi was the friend of my aunt, who did her great service on this occasion, but which she did not return as she ought to have done. She was still beautiful, but not pleasing, and far too fat. I never knew a woman so changeable and capricious. Though she was not very witty, she sometimes made ludicrous and striking repartees. She was at one time still, at another, noisy and quarrelsome, or extravagantly gay; but she had something unaffected, original, and striking in her humour, and if she was often provoking, she was never tiresome, and related a story with great talent. She was married at a very early age to M. des Choisi, who was much older than her, and whose

appearance, it is said, was somewhat repulsive and *crabbed;* and she told a great many droll stories about him, the following amongst the rest.—She had been eighteen months married, and was sixteen years of age, when M. des Choisi, who had just purchased an estate fifty leagues from Paris, wished to reside eight months upon it, and to take his wife with him. Madame des Choisi had never been any where else but at the Palais Royal, and was in despair at the thought of being shut up in an old castle. She called the proposal the *most barbarons act of the most intolerable despotism,* but when she entered the carriage, she wiped off her tears, and durst make no opposition, for M. des Choisi, with his crimson handkerchief tied round his head (that was his travelling costume) had such a terrible aspect, and cast such thundering looks towards her, that the terror he inspired her with almost drove away her sorrow. About the middle of the first day they entered a town, and M. des Choisi wished to halt and see the public buildings it contained. He asked his wife to accompany him, but she answered, that she was so tired already, that she wished for nothing but a little rest; so he left her at the inn, and the moment she was alone, she gave herself up without restraint to the violence of her chagrin. The hostess entered a few minutes afterwards to offer her some refreshment, and was greatly surprised at seeing this young lady bathed in tears.

On being asked the cause of her grief, Madame des Choisi took it into her head to tell her that she had been carried off by an *ugly Turk*, who was taking her to his seraglio at Constantinople. The story greatly alarmed the hostess: "I am not astonished at it," said she, "truly this Turk is much at his ease, for he has not left off the turban which we thought so wonderful." She then proposed to apply to the magistrates, and to make this wicked Turk be arrested; but Madame des Choisi would not consent, and said she was resigned to her fate. The hostess properly replied, that this was no case of resignation at all, and insisted on her advice being adopted. To get rid of her, Madame des Choisi asked for an hour to reflect on the proposal, telling her, at the same time, that *the Turk* would not return in less than three hours. The hostess left her, and alarmed the whole household; and the servants swore mightily that they would not allow the Turk to carry off the young lady to make a *pagan heretic of her*. In a few minutes M. des Choisi returned, and was excessively surprised at the reception he met with, for they told him plainly that he would not be allowed to carry off the young lady, who was taken under the protection of the hostess and her household, and that he might go back to Turkey by himself. M. des Choisi called his servants, and as explanation was entirely out of the question, they were preparing to fight, when Madame

des Choisi, who had heard all the noise, unexpectedly appeared among them, and entreated the hostess and her servants to lay down their arms. As M. des Choisi had pulled out his hunting knife, and showed a fearless look, as well as his two servants, the courage of the assailants was greatly shaken, and they very quietly obeyed the entreaty. When Madame des Choisi was asked the cause of all this by her husband, she confessed it all in the presence of the hostess, who pretended to believe her, but who remained, notwithstanding, ever after persuaded of the truth of the first story, told by a lady so very young and ingenuous. The people of the inn allowed the husband and wife to depart without opposition, but they pitied the fate of the interesting victim.

The Countess of Polignac, daughter of the Countess de Rumin, was, myself excepted, the youngest lady of honour of the Duchess of Chartres. She had been two years a widow, and was mother of a child then five or six years old, who afterwards became Madame de Chambord. The Countess of Polignac was not pretty, but her *petite* size, small feet, beautiful little hands, agreeable look, and something infantine in her whole demeanour, gave her altogether an appearance of grace and fascination. She was kind and agreeable; I always lived in harmony with her, and her death, which took place a few years after, greatly affected me.

There were some ladies at the Palais Royal who had been attached to the late Duchess of Orleans. They kept their former apartments, and came often to dine and sup with the young princess. One of these ladies was the Marquise de Barbantane, of the same age as Madame Blot, and one of her intimate friends. She had been lady of honour to the late duchess, and afterwards governess of the Duchess of Bourbon, sister of the Duke of Chartres. She took charge of the young princess at fifteen years of age, and acted as her governess till she was introduced into society, which was two or three years after my entrance into the Palais Royal. Madame de Barbantane was said to have been handsome, but nothing of it remained at the time I am speaking of. Her nose was of a fiery red colour, her look vulgar, and her carriage cold and affected. Much praise was given to her habits and talents, but she was generally reckoned to want sincerity and unaffectedness. At our first meeting she became my declared enemy, and remained so ever afterwards; hence, I will say nothing about her diposition, for my evidence ought not to be taken.* The old

* My recollection of old grievances does not in the least prevent me finding great pleasure, in defending her against a charge made in the spurious memoirs of Baron de Bezenval. It is therein stated, that Madame de Barbantane had, in her youth, *been mistress* of the old Duke of Orleans. It is an abominable falsehood. It is true that the Duke of Orleans was in love with her for a long

Marchioness of Polignac, whose face was exactly like a monkey's, was lively, witty, and satirical; and though very severe in her reflections on others, she was generally liked, because there was a certain abruptness in her manners and conversation, that gave her the appearance of frankness and sincerity. She obtained the kind of esteem usually granted to witty persons, who are memorable for their *bons mots*, and repartees, when they do not use them so profusely as to acquire the hateful character of ill-nature. She was courted, because she was amusing; and flattered, because she was feared. Her talents and sincerity gave great weight to her suffrage, so that it was generally courted, and was reckoned of the utmost importance to the success of a young lady. She was intimately acquainted with society, and was aware that it never holds up to scorn the errors and foibles of clever persons, who are bold and careless in their bearing, and who keep up a firm and undaunted countenance in the most embarrassing situations. M. de Valence, a man of great talent, told

time, but Madame de Barbantane never gave him the smallest hope, and this fact was known to every one at the Palais Royal. She owed to her good conduct, and the high esteem of the Duke of Orleans, the place she afterwards obtained, of governess of the Duchess of Bourbon. In the sequel, I shall enter into more details concerning those memoirs, falsely attributed to the Baron de Bezenval.—(*Note by the Author.*)

me one day, that the only way never to be ridiculed in society was, *not to take the ridicule*, for when it is gaily and unhesitatingly laughed at, it makes not the slightest impression—and nothing could be more correct. The marchioness had formerly had the Comte de Maillebois for a lover, and, far from concealing it, she gloried in avowing the fact; at this period, she still preserved a strong attachment to him, and though nothing could be more ridiculous at her age, and with her appearance, she laughed at it herself with so much original humour, that criticism was altogether disarmed. She had visited Madame du Barri, to obtain some advantage for M. de Mallebois, and though nothing could be reckoned more improper by the general voice of society, particularly by that of the Palais Royal, yet no notice was taken of it, because she was not the least embarrassed concerning the business, and told every one, that as she had not taken this step for her own advantage, she was certain that every person would excuse her *who knew what love was.*

Another old lady, the Comtesse de Rochambault, governess of the children of the princes of the house of Orleans, in their early years, was now far advanced in life, but had the most serene and happy old age ever beheld. It was the just recompence of a virtuous, pure, and spotless life; she was sincerely pious, gay, and good-tempered, told a story exceed-

ingly well, and her memory, in recalling short and amusing anecdotes, was altogether inexhaustible. I never heard her tell a story twice, unless she was particularly desired. She was incapable of doing an ill-natured thing, from her kind disposition and sound principles, and was as good as she was amiable.

The old Countess of Montauban, mother of Madame de Clermont, was likewise a very good sort of lady, with nothing remarkable about her, except absence of mind, and a ridiculous fondness for good cheer. She was rather clever, and even was an author, for she had published an oriental tale, which was an insipid production, but yet afforded no subject for ridicule. She was much given to play, but more from habit and idleness than from inclination. While playing at *pharaon* one day, she made what is called a *paroli de campagne*, that is, a move in her favour against the rules of the game, which the banker perceiving, he politely told her of it, but she replied, without the slightest emotion: "That may be so—but it is an eagerness very pardonable in a *ponte*." Another time, a person who played deep was standing behind her, and put his arm over her shoulder to lift an immense number of louis he had just won, but on drawing his arm back again, he let more than three-fourths of the money fall on her back, upon which she suddenly turned round to him,

and exclaimed: "What! Sir, do you take me for a Danae." She rose and shook off the golden shower, which made the gambler insinuate, that she had made the *gros dos* only to prevent him getting the whole of his money. She again sat down very coolly to the game, and very properly told him that twenty-four hours were allowed for the payment of debts of honour, that this was not one of that kind, and that he might wait with patience till the next morning. In fact, when she undressed, some of the gold was found, which she scrupulously sent back. Her son, the Abbé de Montauban, was in all respects perfectly pleasing, sprightly, and virtuous. His conversation was keen and full of argument, but always easy and agreeable; and though firm in every thing connected with religious principle, on indifferent subjects he supported either side of the question, but always without irritation, and with infinite gaiety and grace. Conversation never languished while he was in company. He was afterwards Bishop of Nancy, and displayed great talents, learning, and piety in the government of his diocese. He hastened out of France at the revolution, and went to Spain, where he immediately enrolled himself among the hermits of Montserrat, lived several years in this seclusion, and died like a saint.

It remains for me to describe the other gentlemen

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of the Palais Royal, and I ought to begin with the prince.

The Duke of Chartres was then in all the bloom of youth, with a worn-out countenance, derived from the blood he received from his mother, and from his own licentious course of life; in person, he was sprightly, dignified, and elegant. The Count de Pont St. Maurice, his governor, had paid attention to three things only in his education; to make him polite, to give him pleasing and dignified manners, and to teach him *bon ton*—the rest he had left wholly to the care of the tutors. The latter were perfectly qualified to give him sound learning, but the governor thought so little of the cultivation of the mind, that the prince soon perceived it, and found it extremely convenient to adopt his indifference. His sub-governor was M. de Foncemagne, of the French Academy, a very distinguished literary character; and the Abbé Alary, a virtuous, able, and learned clergyman, was his tutor. The two preceptors in vain urged their pupil to study, and complained of his idleness to the governor without effect. Satisfied with his language and manners, M. de Pont showed too clearly that he thought all the rest of very little consequence. M. de Foncemagne and the Abbé Alary became disheartened, and continued their lessons merely for form's sake,

as they saw they were of no real use—and the prince learned nothing. Yet he was not deficient either in talent, memory, or understanding, and early announced benevolent inclinations. The following instance of the latter I was told by M. de Foncemagne. When the prince was only in his fifteenth year, he already gave levees in the morning to the gentlemen who came from the levees of the Duke of Orleans; and amongst the number were officers of every rank belonging to the regiments of the two princes. He took particular notice of an officer, who was remarkable for his fine person and melancholy look. He was told that this officer was very poor, as he gave almost the whole of his pay for the support of his mother and two sisters, who had nothing else to depend on. After hearing this account, he saved the whole of his pocket-money for two months, which amounted to forty louis d'or; but he was much embarrassed how to offer them, till at last he received a baptismal present of sugar-plums. He then wrapped up small parcels of the sugar-plums in paper, and when the poor officer came to his levee, he told him, in a jocular strain, that as he had received a present of some sugar-plums, he would give all the company a share of them. The officer found his so heavy, that he started with surprise, but the young prince made him a sign to say nothing; however, he had no sooner left the palace, than his

gratitude was more incautious than his surprise, for he told the incident to several persons, so that it soon became generally known. I had heard of it long before, but M. de Forcemagne confirmed the correctness of the details.

When the young prince's education was completed, the first *paternal care* of the Duke of Orleans was to give him a mistress—a girl, whom an abandoned wretch was bringing up as a courtesan, and sold to him as quite *new*. The girl was fifteen years of age, she was the famous Mademoiselle Duthé, who afterwards ruined my brother-in-law, and many other persons. The Duke of Orleans boasted of this action as a very kind and prudent precaution to preserve his son's *health*. What moral habits could be expected from an unfortunate young man receiving this first lesson from a father! After this, the Duke of Orleans, far from giving his son virtuous friends, encouraged him to form an intimate acquaintance with the wildest and most dissipated youths of the court, the Chevalier de Coigny, Messieurs de Fitz-James, de Conflans, &c. Yet the young prince, of his own accord, distinguished a virtuous and sensible individual, fourteen years older than himself, the Chevalier de Durfort, belonging to the Palais Royal. He was sincerely attached to him; in fact, he was the only man he ever really loved, though the chevalier would never join his private parties, but

declined the honour with excuses that were not calculated to give him very correct ideas of morality—for he told him, that a *private attachment* prevented him indulging in that kind of dissipation; and without condemning the prince, or endeavouring to profit by the ascendancy he had over him, he refused merely to be the accomplice of his errors—though he was so in reality, by not attempting to extricate him from them, which he could then have done. When the Duke of Chartres entered into public life, at seventeen, he was greatly struck with the affectation and prudery of the ladies of the Palais Royal, of whom his father's society was composed; and to undermine this parade of extravagant feelings, he amused himself by supporting the opposite doctrines, and rushing into the other extreme, he affected complete insensibility, and likewise a careless indifference for subjects in which such a feeling is highly improper; and this, too, almost always against his own conscience and real opinion. This spirit of opposition afterwards became a pernicious habit, which gradually altered the soundness of his judgment, and the native goodness of his heart. As he displayed much politeness, humour, and gaiety in these discussions, he had always the laugh on his side; but the sect of sentimentalists, finding themselves often embarrassed by his arguments, naturally imbibed a strong feeling of

pique and ill-will against him, and revenged themselves by defaming his heart, principles, and disposition. Hence arose the first attacks upon his character. It soon became the general belief, that the Duke of Chartres, possessed of talent, grace, politeness, and pleasing and dignified manners, had yet a hard and unfeeling heart—which was by no means the case. In consequence of this belief, many imaginary wrongs were attributed to him, and he was grossly calumniated; but though he knew it, instead of endeavouring to bring back public opinion, he took the fatal step of despising it, or of holding it at defiance altogether. He has often been seen, in the sequel, disdaining to defend himself against the most odious charges, when a single word would have sufficed.

The other persons belonging to the Palais Royal remain to be considered.

I have already mentioned the Count de Pont St. Maurice, who had been governor of the Duke of Chartres, and who was now first gentleman of the chamber to the Duke of Orleans. At this period, he was about fifty years of age, had a fine person, and a majestic look; no one was so well acquainted with etiquette, and the usages of society; he was quoted as the model of politeness; nothing was more dignified than his language, and in spite of his profound ignorance, his conversation was by no

means unpleasing. Madame de Pont, the widow of a wealthy banker, (M. Mazade,) had married him for love. Her person was still handsome, but her face was common; she was not very clever, but she had some learning, and a great deal of pedantry; her habits were strictly correct, her temper cold and sour, her manners dry and ceremonious, and her conversation silly and uninteresting. M. and Madame de Pont presented a perfect picture of conjugal love, and even in the most trifling incidents of their lives they were so inseparable, that they were always seated beside each other, even at dinners of the utmost pomp and ceremony. The one never went out without the other, and it was asserted, that during the whole fifteen years that they had been married, not the most trifling dispute had arisen between them, or even the slightest difference of opinion. The Count de Pont had a talent truly *unique* for playing comedy; I believe I have already mentioned his singular skill in performing the character of the *Misanthrope*.

The Chevalier de Durfort was not a man of talent, but was well informed, of accomplished manners, regular habits, (according to the courtesy of society,) and displayed such delicate attentions to the ladies, that he was a great favourite with them. I never liked him, because he wanted sincerity, and affected an enthusiasm for talent, literature, and the arts,

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which he did not feel, and which, in fact, he could not feel from the confined nature of his acquirements.

The Count de Thiars, brother of the Count de Bissy, was reckoned the most amiable man of our society. Though he was remarkably ugly, he had given rise to celebrated passions; he had but one kind of talent, that of conversation, which is sufficient for society; he wrote some wretched songs, the verses of which were incorrect both in measure and rhyme, and yet such things are sufficient to fascinate some ladies. He composed a detestable little novel, which, however, he had the prudence never to publish. He had read it with great mystery to several persons, who mentioned it to me as a master-piece. I had then been eight months at the Palais Royal, and as M. de Thiars treated me with distinguished attention, I easily obtained permission to hear it read to *a very small party*. I expected something light and agreeable, and I heard the silliest story that any one ever had the folly to write. He pretended that he had put a great many satirical allusions into it, but I could not perceive one of them, for every thing seemed equally trifling and common-place, and there were neither portraits, nor pointed wit, nor natural description in the work. At each pretended allusion, he looked at me, and seeing at length that I did not understand one of them, he fell into a pet immediately, in spite of all the praises lavished on

him plentifully by the rest of the company, who were listening to this little *chef d'œuvre* for the third or fourth time. I was in the utmost trouble, for I could not feel rapturously delighted; yet I made great efforts to smile, and said from time to time *that is charming*, but at mere hazard, reluctantly, and I have no doubt, with a very foolish and downcast countenance, because I saw very plainly that they were displeased at me, and had formed a very bad opinion of my talents and judgment. Here began my aversion to the perusal of literary works in company, which I have so often ridiculed since. M. de Thiars never forgot that I had not admired and spoken with rapture of his book. In other respects, he was really lively, amusing, mild, witty, and altogether highly agreeable.

The Viscount de Schomberg was very clever and well informed, and had an open, sincere disposition; and though not ugly, there was something silly in his carriage, look, and conversation, and an indescribable awkwardness in his gestures that rendered him unpleasing. He knew innumerable passages of poetry, and recited them in the most ludicrous manner. My aunt took a fancy for playing *Zaire*, which was done at Bagnolet, in a house the Duke of Orleans then possessed there. M. de Schomberg took the character of *Orosmane*, and never, assuredly, will such an *Orosmane* be seen again. The

spectators kept their handkerchiefs to their faces to restrain the violence of their laughter—never in my life did I laugh so immoderately, as at the beautiful pause—

"Je ne suis point jaloux—Si je l'etais jamais!——"

He made such a singular gesture, and such an extraordinary grimace, that a stifled laugh burst from every one in the theatre; he thought he had produced a prodigious effect, and assumed an air of satisfaction that made him so completely ridiculous, that several persons could not hold a moment longer, but rushed abruptly out of the house, to enjoy their laughter without constraint. The afterpiece was *Le Roi et le Fermier*, in which I played the character of the little girl. My aunt performed *Zaire* very badly, which was excusable enough with such an *Orosmane*. We had found him bad at the rehearsals, but he greatly surpassed himself in the actual performance. He was an ardent admirer of Voltaire, had made several journeys to Ferney, kept up a regular correspondence with the patriarch, and was, consequently, a *philosopher*, that is, impious in the extreme. He boasted of being an atheist, yet, like Hobbes, had an insurmountable terror of ghosts. Whenever he met a funeral, or any of his acquaintance died, he made his valet sleep beside his bed for several nights afterwards. Yet he had shown the

most distinguished gallantry in war; and it was he who fought with M. Lefort, an officer of his own regiment, the famous duel, in which the combatants knelt down on the same cloak, and fired their pistols at each other. M. Lefort was shot dead on the spot; and M. de Schomberg, who was not the least hurt, gave an annuity to his widow, and paid for the education of his children. I know not whether it would have been proper to refuse the money necessary for the education of her children, if she really could do nothing for them, but this I am certain of, that it would have been more seemly in her to have supported herself by manual labour, or to have gone to service, than to have received for herself an annuity from her husband's murderer. M. de Schomberg was converted by the revolution, when he went to Dresden, and four or five years afterwards, died in sentiments of the greatest piety. In spite of his *philosophism*, (which he imbibed solely from the flatteries of Voltaire,) and the mania of *bel esprit*, I was very fond of him; his conduct was always kind, and perfectly proper towards me, and I found him a firm friend on all occasions. In my presence he never spoke about religion, as I had made him promise that he would not. He liked the company of women only; and as he never had been a great favourite with them himself, he thought proper to be satisfied with the character of confident. He had

such an officious and interesting way of interfering in all their affairs, of whatever nature they might be, that at last he became absolutely necessary to their comfort; while, either from a pre-concerted system, or from natural simplicity of mind, he made them think he believed all he was told, and never suspected any exaggeration, artifice, or concealment. While thus engaged, he preserved an unfortunate passion for one of his friends, which, though he never told, was clearly perceived, and gratefully remembered by the individual. This was Madame de Blot, for whom he felt an attachment during the space of ten years, at the very time he was her confident and likewise that of her lover, the Count de Frize. It was from him that I took the idea of the character of *the Baron*, in the *Vœux Temeraires*.

The Count de Valency, brother of the Marquis d'Estampes, and a relation of M. de Genlis, was also attached to the Palais Royal. His disposition was full of kindness and good-nature, so that he was exceedingly pleasing in society. He had a strong passion for the fine arts, particularly for painting, concerning which his conversation was very interesting, as he was an excellent connoisseur. No one could play better than him the characters of lovers in the comedies of Marivaux. The Count de Blot, husband of the lady of honour, was, without exception, the most shallow-minded man ever seen in society.

From the *sentimental theories* that his wife was continually maintaining, he had caught some high-sounding phrases, which he was always misplacing in conversation; and as he was likewise desirous of pleasing the Duke of Chartres, he mingled with this pedantry an extreme affectation of gaiety. The nonsense of his serious manner, and the heaviness of his attempts at wit, gave him a most ludicrous species of originality; but as he was, in other respects, a very good kind of man, people were amused by his foibles, without holding them up to ridicule, and he was himself persuaded that he was greatly admired in the private parties of the Palais Royal.

The Count d'Osmond was witty, absent, and unaffected, and beloved by every one. The Vicomte de Latour du Pin had a cultivated mind, was of a frank, gay, and obliging disposition, possessed pleasing accomplishments, and was an excellent performer of *proverbs* and comedies. The Vicomte de Clermont had at that time a fine person, which was rather injured by nervous affections. He read a great deal, but had the misfortune not only to be attacked with the mania of quotations, but of making them almost always incorrectly.

The Baron de Poudens, first *maitre d'hotel*, was a man of very sound judgment, and of an excellent heart, and so well disposed to think well of others, that he neither saw nor suspected the most bare-

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faced piece of ill-nature. Apart from all rivalships, he spent forty years at the Palais Royal, without even suspecting, that during that whole space of time a single quarrel had taken place. He believed that we lived in the most intimate union with each other, and that this court was, without exception, composed of the best people on the face of the earth. The praises he indiscriminately bestowed were ludicrous enough, for he eulogised the *simplicity* and *candour* of persons who were distinguished for very opposite qualities. I thought there was something affecting in this want of tact, which really sprung from a kindliness of disposition, resembling that of the golden age.

The Marquis de Barbantane was not deficient in talent, but he was extremely satirical, extravagantly polite, and not very conversable. He possessed neither the accomplishments, the bold and open disposition, nor the liveliness of his brother, the Chevalier de Barbantane. Besides these persons, there were at the Palais Royal, Monsieur and Madame de St. Felix. The latter had been attached to the late Duchess of Orleans, and was a lady of the greatest merits, from her virtue, excellent disposition, and irreproachable conduct. Her husband was distinguished for the same qualities; they both lived very retired, and seldom came to dine with the princess.

Besides some persons who did not reside in the Palais Royal, whom I have already mentioned, there were often present, on *private days*, Monsieur and Madame Duchâtelet, who afterwards perished on the scaffold. M. Duchâtelet was solemn and silent, but was said to be a man of great merit, and the memoirs he left behind him indicate an excellent heart. Madame Duchâtelet always maintained an irreproachable conduct, and never interfered in a single intrigue. It was she whom the Duchesse de Grammont defended with so much courage and energy before the revolutionary tribunal. M. de Talleyrand,* (who escaped from France at the time, and came to England, where I then was,) related to us the particulars, in the most pathetic manner. Far from defending herself, when called before the revolutionary tribunal, Madame de Grammont thought only of her friend, who was present at the examination, and preserved a profound silence, with her hands clasped together, and her eyes bent on the ground. The following were the exact words of Madame de Grammont: "That you should put me to death—I, who despise and abhor you—I, who would have wished to rouse all Europe against you—that you should send *me* to the scaffold—nothing is more natural; but what has this angel (pointing to

* Afterwards Prince Talleyrand.

Madame Duchâtelet) done to you—she who has borne every suffering without complaint, whose whole life has been distinguished only by actions of kindness and humanity?" The two ladies, as well as Monsieur Duchâtelet, were hurried off to the guillotine! . . . .

Among the other individuals whom it remains for me mention, was the Marquis de Durfort, who was called *the great Durfort*. Uprightness and good-nature were said to make him agreeable in society; he had nothing striking but a handsome and dignified person, and he was highly and deservedly esteemed. The *mysterious* count, aftewards Duc de Chabot, never spoke in company but to give a very brief answer, or to whisper a few words about himself to two or three individuals, who afterwards quoted his sayings with a species of enthusiasm. His brother, the Vicomte de Jarnac, was considered to be a finished model of politeness and urbanity, loved the arts, and was an accomplished connoisseur. The Chevalier d'Oraison, whose disposition and manners were strikingly original, and in the most pleasing sense of the expression—was a man of prodigious learning, and the only one who made a daily use of it in company, without ever being reckoned pedantic. He related the most remarkable sayings and characteristics of the ancients, but always *à propòs*, carelessly and briefly, and mingled with his learned talk such pretty

trifles of amusement, and short witty anecdotes of common life, that his whole conversation had such features of simplicity and liveliness, that every appearance of affectation was dispelled. The Marechal de Castries was much less agreeable, His friends had given him a great name as a *statesman;* his conduct in war had secured him a very brilliant one as a general, and in society he had the modesty to be a perfect nullity.

At this period* grand recollections and recent traditions still maintained in France good principles, sound ideas, and national virtues, already somewhat weakened by pernicious writings, and a reign full of faults; but in the city and at court, there were still found that refined taste and that exquisite politeness, of which every Frenchman had a right to be proud, since, throughout all Europe, it was universally held to be the most perfect model of grace, elegance, and dignity. Several ladies, and some few great lords, were then met with in society, who had seen Louis XIV., and they were respected as the wrecks of a great age. Youth became restrained in their company, and naturally became silent, modest, and attentive; they were listened to with profound interest, for they seemed to be the organs of history. They were consulted concerning etiquette and the usages of society; their suffrage was of the utmost import-

* About 1770.

ance to those who were entering into public life; in a word, contemporaries of so many great men of all kinds, these venerable characters seemed placed in society to maintain the ancient feelings of politeness, glory, and patriotism, or, at least, to delay their melancholy decline. But in a short time, the influence of these feelings scarcely appeared except in an elevated style, in a simple *theory* of délicate and generous conduct. Virtue was retained only from the remains of good taste, which still held in esteem its language and appearance. Every one, to conceal his own way of thinking, became stricter in observing the *bienséances;* the most refined ideas were sported in conversation concerning delicacy, greatness of mind, and the duties of friendship; and even chimerical virtues were fancied, which was easy enough, considering that the happy agreement of conversation and conduct did not exist. But hypocrisy always betrays itself by exaggeration, for it never knows when to stop; false sensibility has no shades, never employs any but the strongest colours, and heaps them on with the most ridiculous prodigality.

There now appeared in society a very numerous party of both sexes, who declared themselves the partisans and depositaries of the old traditions respecting taste, etiquette, and morals themselves, which they boasted of having brought to perfection; they declared themselves supreme arbiters of all the

proprieties of social life, and claimed for themselves exclusively the high-sounding appellation of *good company*. Every person of bad *ton*, or licentious notoriety, was excluded from the society; but to be admitted, neither a spotless character nor eminent merit was necessary. Infidels, devotees, prudes, and women of light conduct were indiscriminately received. The only qualifications necessary were *bon ton*, dignified manners, and a certain respect in society, acquired by rank, birth, and credit at court, or by display, wealth, talent, and personal accomplisments. Whenever claims are firmly and perseveringly supported, though they be not well-founded, they give the persons who make them a certain footing and consideration in society, when they are wealthy, clever, and keep a good table. Sharp-sighted people and keen observers may laugh at them; but the public yield, as the very obstinacy of their pretensions seems to give them a just right. Though the dandies are despised by the ladies, yet they are reckoned *hommes à bonnes fortunes*. Bustling and self-important individuals without influence deceive no one; yet they are courted and flattered by the votaries of ambition and intrigue, who reckon it prudent to engage them in their interests. Prudes obtain the external respect due to virtue; pedants without real learning, enjoy in conversation almost all the deference paid to the learned. When we reflect on the never-failing

success of claims perseveringly supported, who would attach much importance to the suffrages of society.

The usurping and arrogant circle I have just mentioned, that society so contemptuous towards every other, roused up against itself a host of enemies; but as it received among its members every man of well-known merit, or of high fashion from his rank or situation, the enmity it inspired was evidently the effect of envy, only gave it more eclat, and the unanimous voice of the public designated it by the title of the *grand society*, which it retained till the revolution. This did not mean that it was the most numerous, but that, in the general opinion, it was the most choice and brilliant by the rank, personal estimation, *ton* and manners of those who composed it. There, in the parties too numerous to claim confidence, and at the same time not sufficiently so to prevent conversation—there, in parties of fifteen or twenty individuals, were, in fact, united all the ancient French politeness and grace. All the means of pleasing and fascinating were combined with infinite skill. They felt that to distinguish themselves from low company and ordinary societies, it was necessary they should preserve the *ton* and manners that were the best indications of modesty, good-nature, indulgence, decency, mildness, and elevated sentiments. Thus good taste of itself taught them that to dazzle and fascinate, it was necessary to borrow all the

forms of the most amiable virtues. Politeness, in these assemblies, had all the ease and grace which it can derive from early habit and delicacy of mind; slander was banished from the *public* parties, for its keenness could not have been well combined with the charm of mildness that each person brought into the general store. Discussion never degenerated into personal dispute. There existed in all their perfection, the art of praising without insipidity and without pedantry, and of replying to it without either accepting or despising it;—of showing off the good qualities of others without seeming to protect them; and of listening with obliging attention. If all these appearances had been founded on moral feeling, we should have seen the golden age of civilization. Was it hypocrisy? No—it was the external coat of ancient manners preserved by habit and good taste, which always survive the principles that produced them; but which having no longer any solid basis, gradually loses its original beauties, and is finally destroyed by the inroads of refinement and exaggeration.

In the less numerous circles of the same society, much less caution was observed, and the *ton*, still strictly decorous, was much more *piquant*. No one's honour was attacked, for delicacy always prevailed; yet under the deceitful veils of secrecy, thoughtlessness, and absence of mind, slander might go on without offence. The most pointed arrows of malice

were not excluded, provided they were skilfully aimed, and without any apparent ill-will on the part of the speaker, for no one could speak of his avowed enemies. To amuse themselves with slander, it required to arise from an unsuspected source, and to be credible in its details. Even in the private parties of the society, malignity always paid respect to the ties of blood, friendship, gratitude, and intimate acquaintance; but beyond that, all others might be sacrificed without mercy. No one's reputation was branded—but the society held bad *ton*, vulgar and *provincial* manners up to scorn, and ridiculed every one they disliked—which was actually sacrificing them on the altar of public scorn, for their frivolous decrees had the force of law. This, too, was a natural consequence. Wherever an association is generally regarded as superior to every other of the same kind, there exists a tribunal, from whose sentences there is no appeal.

To whom can we appeal, when there exists no sovereign power to whom we can have recourse? When we find no longer persons forming a pre-eminent society, established by unanimous consent, the arbiters of good taste, the dispensers of praise, and judges of propriety, the power of ridicule is weakened; and this is the reason why nothing is ridiculous among nations uncivilized or sunk into barbarism; and even among those which have been long agitated by po-

litical convulsions. After these convulsions are over, the most essential and speedy step to be taken is the re-establishment of order; but the graces cannot be organized; they cannot be recalled by edicts; they easily take flight, but it requires a long time to recal them. The only subject of ridicule which can exist in the decay of good taste is that of folly united to insolence; this will be always universally felt, in all countries and in all nations.

In order to finish my picture of the highest circles of the eighteenth century, I must add, that in the most private of its coteries, it was requisite that the scandal should be as it were *divided;* for any one person who should have undertaken to retail it would have soon become odious. It was also necessary, even in the commerce of scandal, to mingle in the narration something of grace, gaiety, or whim; mere scandal is always a melancholy affair, and is always coarse and vulgar; besides it would have contrasted ill with the habitual tone of these circles: it would have been in a bad and low taste.

But the fault for which there was no redemption, which nothing could excuse, was meanness, either in manners or language, or in actions, when such a thing could be thoroughly proved. It was not that the principles of society were so lofty as to inspire indignation at a mean action, which should have obtained its perpetrator a large fortune or an excellent

place; but there is still among us more vanity than cupidity, and as long as pride preserves that character, it will sometimes resemble greatness of mind. When a mean action which turned out profitably was performed with certain precautions, and in a certain way, it was easy to feign a belief that it was only a necessary step in a system of laudable though selfish policy; and, like the thieves among the Lacedæmonians, only the awkward were punished. There were rarely seen, at least at this period, any instances of shameless meanness, and this is saying a great deal. At court there were no examples of one friend supplanting another, or a fallen minister being disgracefully deserted by those who had paid assiduous court to him in the time of his favour; on the contrary, as the principles and the heart had far less to do with the conduct than vanity, there was a proportionate increase of splendour and ostentation in the manner of performing generous actions, which sometimes went even the length of arrogance; not content with visiting an exiled minister, he received a kind of adoration; he was deified, while the sovereign who had dismissed him was openly neglected.

As has been already said, the moral code of this brilliant society was supported on a very weak foundation, which was already about to sink; but there were still legislators and judges—the laws were not yet abolished. The *good society* of this period did not

content itself with pronouncing frivolous decrees about fashion and manners; but exercised a severe judgment over morals, which formed a kind of supplement to the laws; it repressed by its censures those vices which human tribunals do not punish—ingratitude and avarice; and while the laws punished evil actions, the voice of society condemned the inclinations that led to them. The voice of general disapprobation took away from the person who was the subject of it a part of his self-esteem; and his exclusion from society had the most fearful influence upon his destiny. His very existence was embittered by the terrible sentence, "Every one has shut the door against him;" a phrase which was only applicable to persons belonging to this kind of society. This kind of power was neither that of kings, nor of parliaments, nor of courts of judicature; it was that of *honour;* it was sovereign till the revolution, and the persons who wielded it, by universal consent, without opposition, and without rebellion to its decrees, had so much the more right to style their own society exclusively *good company,* as they have never abused the power they held. Though dealing largely in that kind of scandal which leaves the reputation stainless, they never agreed in believing any accusation which was sure to dishonour the subject of it, but upon its publication by the universal voice, and on moral proofs the most satisfactory; at the same time, by an admirable pro-

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cess of equity, honour being more delicate than the laws, was for that very reason less absolute than they: its decrees not being founded on undoubted proofs, were not without appeal; they excluded a person from the *best* company, and drove him into a lower circle, but they did not fix him there for ever. I have already said, (and it is not useless to insist upon that axiom,) that the distinction has never been established which exists between a person dishonoured by public opinion, and one dishonoured by a notorious and incontestible action, or by a judgment of the laws. The two things have in fact been always confounded; and both persons are equally said to have been dishonoured—which is neither just nor correct.

The word *opinion* signifies a belief without positive proofs: if these proofs existed, it would no longer be an opinion, but a formal and irrevocable judgment; and it is only a judgment of this kind which can lead to *dishonour*. Simple opinion alone, however general and however well-founded it may seem to be, excludes, as has been already said, whenever it attacks his *honour*, the individual in question from good society; but this sentence is not irrevocable, because it has not the power to *dishonour*. We have seen persons thus degraded by opinion, belong to the worst circles for ten, fifteen, or twenty years, and afterwards by a change of behaviour, or by fortunate circumstances, suddenly assume another existence, and

become once more persons of the *best* company. A person dishonoured by a criminal procedure, or who has fled from his post as a soldier, is for ever dishonoured, because these things are not equivocal, and any stain of positive dishonour can never be effaced. In the accusations of the world there are no legitimate witnesses, nor confrontations, nor absolute certainties; and there are always mingled in the scandal many calumnious inventions. One woman, for a single notorious adventure, may be entirely ruined, if it cannot be denied; while another, after a thousand irregularities, may escape, and may recover the good opinion of society, because in her case there is only hearsay and opinion. This is right, because the principle, that *dishonour*, which means, that some *indelible stain*, cannot exist without *irrefragable proofs*, is at once equitable and useful. If *opinion alone* had the power of dishonouring, malignity would have no bounds, and calumny no check. It is admirable to reflect, how, without any laws or regulations, these matters establish themselves naturally in society. If opinion had no power, vice would walk abroad in hideous effrontery, and the weak and the timid would be seduced with far greater facility. Opinion, in short, in all well-regulated society, has precisely the degree of influence necessary, and its perfect balance is the best support of good morals.

At this time, which was on my first arrival at the

Palais Royal, I made many melancholy reflections on my new mode of existence; every thing seemed to aggravate them, and to augment the sadness which already afflicted me. Nothing is so apt to render one discontented with new scenes of life, and new friends, as an unquiet conscience, which reproaches its possessor with something evil! . . . . For the first time I was surrounded by malevolent glances; I was ill at my ease; if I spoke it was with distrust and with circumspection; and I thus lost all that had hitherto rendered me agreeable, and for which I had been so highly commended—my frankness and my gaiety. All the men received me admirably, and each endeavoured to excel the other in his attentions; but their gallantry was far from reassuring, when I saw the enmity of my own sex! It has always been easy to intimidate me by a dryness and coldness of manner; but impertinence has constantly produced upon me an effect entirely contrary. I proved this in one instance, to the great surprise of all those who witnessed the scene which I am now going to relate.

The days on which operas were performed, the palace was open to all the persons who had been presented; they were allowed to come to supper without any invitation. The other days were called the *private days;* there was a list of the select society, which consisted of eighteen or twenty; those who were once invited, might come afterwards when they

chose. Though we were eighteen or twenty in number, there were generally but ten or twelve present. These suppers were extremely agreeable: there was no play; the princess and the ladies sat at a round table, knitting, or working at any trifling matter; the men sitting by their sides, or standing behind them, kept up the conversation, which in general was piquant and witty. One of these evenings I happened to be placed between M. de Thiars and the Chevalier de Durfort; the Duchess of Chartres and several of the ladies belonging to the palace, among others Madame de Blot, and her friend Madame de Montboissier, were engaged in knitting; the Duke of Chartres, and several other gentlemen, were walking about the saloon. I was making a purse. The conversation turned upon the *Nouvelle Héloïse* of J. J. Rousseau. Madame de Blot fell into raptures about the work, and in a short time her enthusiasm became so loud and so emphatic, that the Duke of Chartres and the gentlemen who were with him approached, and stood near the table in a half circle; the Duke of Chartres stood opposite Madame de Blot, who was a little embarrassed by this movement; she was not at all fond of supporting sentimental theses before him, for she knew he only listened attentively to her arguments in order to turn them into ridicule; nevertheless, as she felt herself in train for being eloquent and declamatory, she went on with the same warmth,

and became at last so animated, that she concluded her harangue, by saying that there existed not a woman of *true sensibility*, who did not require an almost superhuman virtue to refrain from consecrating her whole life to J. J. Rousseau, if she was sure of being passionately loved by him in return. On hearing this strange declaration, the Duke of Chartres cried out, that he entreated us all to give our word never to reveal what Madame de Blot had just said, for that, if Rousseau ever came to the knowledge of it, he would come and carry off Madame de Blot, and that thus she would be lost for ever to M. de Blot, to the Palais Royal, to her friends, and to society. I had the politeness to restrain myself; and I did not even smile. Madame de Blot recommenced with some bitterness; Madame de Montboissier and Messieurs de Thiars and de Schomberg came to her assistance; they said, that a little exaggeration should be forgiven to so enthusiastic an admirer; the Duke of Chartres, with great mildness, and in the gravest manner agreed to this, and began again to walk up and down the room. All was now apparently over; but Madame de Blot was piqued, vexed, and in very bad humour. The *Nouvelle Héloïse* was once more mentioned; when suddenly Madame de Blot remarked, that during the whole discussion I had not opened my lips; and she asked me the reason, in a tone which was any thing but mild. I replied simply, that I was

not qualified to mingle in the conversation, because (which was true) I had not read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, nor even the *Emile*. Upon this she said, in an ironical manner, that this was surprising; and even went the length of saying, that my denial was a singular *affectation;* this expression offended me, for it was as much as to say, that she believed I did not speak the truth. "No, madam" replied I, "I see too many ridiculous affectations, to have any of my own. I have not read these two works, because I know they are not fit for persons of my age; when I shall have attained yours, madam, I shall read them, because I understand they contain many excellent things, and because I shall then be able to speak of them without any offence to the rules of propriety." This little speech, which was uttered without agitation, and without embarrassment, by a person who had hitherto appeared so timid, produced the utmost astonishment in the faces of all the company, and in Madame de Blot a violent fit of anger. Being exceedingly affected in every thing, she affected also to be young; and I had irritated her on all points; she was quite disconcerted, she reddened, stammered, and at last said, that she did not know I was a *saint*, or that I carried *prudery* to such an excess. I replied, that I felt myself exceedingly honoured by the title of *saint*, though I should be sorry to be thought a *prude;* but that, at all events, my prudery would

never lead me to sustain such absurd theses as hers. These replies confounded Madame de Blot; I felt my advantage, and I preserved an imperturbable serenity. Madame de Blot became at last quite furious; she was never before seen so utterly to go beyond her ordinary disposition, which was not merely reserved, but cold. At last, M. de Schomberg said to me in a whisper: "You only want one more success—and that is to yield, and put an end to the discussion." Upon this I bent my eyes upon my work, and ceased to speak. Madame de Blot continued to attack me; M. de Schomberg and others started another subject; the conversation changed, and Madame de Blot looked sullen. I was modest in my triumph—a thing which is always very easy; this evening obtained me five or six admirers, but at the same time I made myself an enemy, who never pardoned me that little victory.

This scene made a great sensation at the Palais Royal, and gave me the kind of consideration which always attends those persons who know how to attack in the proper time and place, and with becoming moderation; besides, as Madame de Blot was not at all a favourite at the Palais Royal, I easily acquired the reputation of having been in the right.

M. de Schomberg came to me two days after to talk with me about this important affair, and to endeavour (at the same time agreeing that I was not in the wrong) to excuse Madame de Blot; he main-

tained that she had *naturally* a great liking to me, and that she desired my friendship; which, with my usual credulity, I easily persuaded myself to believe; and I promised to re-assume towards her an appearance of friendship, and a wish to please. I kept my word; but as the credulity and ingenuousness of my character have never prevented me from reading the faces of my acquaintance, and discovering any appearances of falsehood, I saw distinctly in her features and manners something forced and constrained; however, I persuaded myself that this proceeded only from her embarrassment; and as she was always kind and affable in her behaviour to me, at least in her speech, and her protestations, I did not doubt an instant of her sincerity.

By a tacit and general convention, all enmities were suspended in society: not only those persons who were known to be notoriously hostile to each other, showed no mutual tokens of resentment, but they treated each other with all the outward tokens of regard and politeness; nevertheless, these condescensions were never permitted to go the length of testimonies of esteem, for nothing, at this period, excused hypocrisy when it could be discovered. Never having till then experienced the consequences of hate or malevolence, these shades of character were unknown to me; I erred respecting them long, and my error

frequently produced the most unhappy calculations in my friendships.

From time to time I met the Viscount de Custines, and I thought he had at length given up a passion which had made so great a noise, and from the existence of which, I believed I had withdrawn all hope; I felt pleased, however, with the strong and tender remembrance he preserved of his angelic sister-in-law, and felt much disposed to conceive a real friendship for him. I have promised to relate, in continuation, the history of my acquaintance with him; I shall, therefore, begin it farther back, and carry it on without interruption to the catastrophe; and the following is that singular narrative, which I desire may be perused by all young females:

The Viscount de Custines was never married; he resided with his brother, who had the tenderest friendship for him. At the beginning of my acquaintance with his sister-in-law, he seemed to feel a great interest in me. He was then twenty-seven or twenty-eight, and his figure and face were peculiarly elegant; his face was esteemed handsome, but it was never agreeable to me, because it expressed habitually mockery and irony; and there was in his glance something furtive, false, and malignant, which I have never seen in any other face, and which seemed to me so much the more surprising, as he had a fair

complexion and blue eyes, which in general give a physiognomy an air of mildness. He had talents and abilities; he was occasionally lively, his conversation was amusing, his manners were elegant, and he possessed the reputation of a well behaved, well read, and amiable young man. He had studied a great deal; and was admirably versed in the history of France, and in the memoirs which relate to it. He conversed well on this subject, and without pedantry. When I consulted my reason and my judgment, he appeared to me worthy of the highest esteem; when I looked at him and observed him, he displeased me exceedingly. He pretended to be very fond of music, which gave a colour to the transports which he exhibited when I played on the harp or sung; he seemed to be especially enchanted with the fine air in *Castor and Pollux*, "Tristes apprêts, pâles flambeaux;" and one evening his enthusiasm rose to such a height, that he suddenly affected to become ill, and rushed out of the room. He returned in a quarter of an hour afterwards; but so pale, that every person in company was struck with the change. I have been always convinced that he possessed some secret to make his colour change at will. This same evening he said a few words to me in secret, that seemed very like a declaration of love; and two days after, (which was Sunday, the day when M. de Genlis was always at Versailles,) he wrote me a passionate letter,

four pages long. This letter breathed of love the *purest* and most disinterested; he desired nothing, he said, but to be permitted *to adore me, to devote his life to me.* The letter was well written, but with too great an affectation in the phrases, and the style was too much marked by emphasis. I made no reply to it. I supped that evening with Madame de Custines; and felt, in going there, more curiosity than embarrassment. My heart was not touched, but I could not have conceived that a person so full of mockery could be so impassioned. There were but five or six persons with Madame de Custines. The conversation was general; the viscount maintained some sentimental theses of the most extravagant kind, which, in his mouth, sounded ridiculous. At supper he seated himself by me, and ten minutes afterwards, he told me, that I had been that morning to Poitevin's baths. I asked him how he knew I had bathed? "I know all that you do," replied he, "because I follow you every where, under a thousand disguises; how often your eyes have beamed on me, without your recognizing my person! Yesterday at noon, you were at the Luxembourg; you wore a blue dress; and this morning on returning from the bath, you went to mass at the church of the Carmelites. I remained behind you for a quarter of an hour; then I waited for you at the church-door, and you gave me alms as you passed."…. This story was interrupted by

some one speaking to the viscount; in the mean time, I remained in a state of stupefaction, trying to recollect all the poor persons I had seen that morning. On leaving table, I begged him to tell me how much I had given him; "two sous," replied he, "which I shall have set in gold, and suspended to a chain, to wear, during my whole life, next my heart." I began to laugh, and to ridicule these pretended disguises; but as he really told me all I had done, and what I had distributed to the poor in small pieces of money, I remained very uncertain on the subject in my own mind.

I have always been fond of that kind of singularity which had nothing disagreeable in it; it is a fault in a woman, because it may lead her to take many imprudent steps. The history of all these disguises occasioned in me a great curiosity; I can, nevertheless, say, with the most scrupulous veracity, that they never induced me to give the most trifling hope to him who was the object of it; my curiosity only had the effect of preventing me from returning his letters unopened. He wrote me volumes every Sunday, to recount to me all I had done in the week; and this with an exactness and minuteness, which at last left no doubt on my mind, that he followed me throughout, and every where—in my walks, in the streets, in the churches, and even into my little garden—and always so well disguised, that it was impossible for me

to recognise him. Even if I had been attached to him, I could not have thought more of him than I did; for I was always occupied, when I went out, with examining every one who came near me, in the expectation of discovering him under some strange disguise. One evening at Madame de Custines', he came near me while I was tuning my harp, and half opening his waistcoat, he showed me my two sous, framed in a beautiful manner, and attached to a chain of brown hair. I smiled and enquired to whom the hair belonged?—" I *could* have employed none but your's," was his reply.—"What!" rejoined I, "mine?" —" Yes," said he, " certainly. I shall tell you how I obtained it at supper."

There was this evening a large party at supper, and it was easy to converse at table without the risk of being overheard; but as soon as I was seated, I renewed my question relative to the chain of hair. " Well," said he, " since you insist upon knowing, I cut the lock from your head myself, in dressing your hair." At these words, I burst into a fit of laughter. " I am serious," added he, " Madame Dufour, your hair-dresser,* sends you frequently, in place of her-

* About this time there were *women* who dressed the hair of the ladies; it would have been reckoned indecent to have had their hair dresed by a man. A year afterwards, male-hair-dressers came into fashion, and the women were no longer employed.—(*Note by the Author.*)

self, one of her apprentices to dress your head: so, dressed as a woman, and with the art of disguising myself, which I now possess in a supreme degree, (thanks to your cruelty,) I came and dressed your hair about three weeks ago, under the name of one of these girls, whom I contrived to bribe." During this history I listened to all his extravagant stories with an inexpressible astonishment, for I remembered that among the girls who used to dress my hair, there was one extremely silent, who had several times tempted me to smile by her continual sighing, and I began really to imagine that the viscount might have performed this part, though the recollection I preserved of the features of the young woman I allude to, in no degree resembled those of the viscount; but I easily supposed him to have all the art of disguising himself which he boasted he had. I thought it quite possible that he might have obtained, through Madame de Custines, all the details relative to Madame Dufour, who dressed the hair of his sister-in-law sometimes, as well as mine. But what left me the most in doubt, was his talent for hair-dressing, which I could not comprehend. He assured me that he had passed six weeks in practising the art in private, after he had determined upon stealing a lock of my hair. There was some truth in his stories; but there mingled in them an infinite number of falsehoods and inventions; nevertheless, in spite of my taste for the *singular*,

the unbounded audacity of these enterprises caused me the greatest terror; and I made him give me his word of honour, that at least he would never introduce himself into my house. Notwithstanding his promise to that effect, I was in a state of continual alarm, and all my curiosity was changed into terror. If, in passing through the antichamber, I happened to see a strange face among the servants, or met one on the staircase, I trembled lest it should be the viscount; if I heard M. de Genlis elevate his voice, or speak in an angry tone, I was ready to faint, imagining that he had recognised my pursuer, and that they were about to fight. These painful emotions began to change my curiosity into aversion for the hero of this strange romance, which had amused me greatly for three or four months. I returned him the first letter he wrote me without breaking the seal, as I ought to have done all after the first. A few days after the return of his letter, I met him at a large breakfast party, at the house of one of my friends, with whom he was well acquainted: he found means of telling me, with eyes of fury, that if in future I returned his letters thus, he would not answer for what he might do; but if, on the contrary, I continued to receive and read them, even though I should be cruel in other respects, he would keep most scrupulously the word of honour he had pledged me, and which he had given but upon that condition.

Fear decided me to submit to this agreement, though I was secretly indignant that he should have the power of thus governing me. I told him, not in jest, but with real bitterness of spirit, that he had no generosity in his disposition. He replied, that no man equalled him in greatness of soul, and in purity of sentiment; and that his whole conduct towards me had given proof of it. I replied not; I began to fear him, and I did not choose to irritate him uselessly. He continued therefore to write to me; but as there was no longer in his letters the same *official narrative* of *espionnage* which had diverted me so much, I thought them a mere cento of tumid phrases from some bad novel, and did not read the half of them. In the spring I got rid of him. I went to pass six weeks at the Isle-Adam, where he was not invited. I returned to Paris, where I met him again at his sister-in-law's, still paying me as much attention, and appearing as impassioned as ever. Our Sunday and Tuesday suppers recommenced. One evening, in general conversation, we spoke of several young men belonging to the court, who had gone without permission to Corsica, to serve in the army as simple volunteers. Every one blamed them; and though I had no kind of connexion with any of them, I defended their conduct in the most vehement manner; I praised their behaviour with enthusiasm; and added, that it had something chivalrous in it, which

could not fail to have its effect in the eyes of all our sex. When we were about to depart, the viscount gave me his arm to conduct me to my carriage; and when we were on the head of the staircase, "Madam," said he, "have you any commands for Corsica?"—"What!" replied I laughing, "are *you* going to Corsica?"—"Did not you approve of the conduct of those who have gone there?"—"But you are in jest." "No, madam, I never was more in earnest; I shall not go to bed; I set off at five o'clock, that is to say, in four hours hence." I could not persuade myself that he was capable of such a piece of folly; but the next morning on waking, I received a note from Madame de Custines, who scolded me for what I had said the evening before, which she said had induced her brother-in-law *to set out for Corsica at five o'clock in the morning.* I confess that my vanity was flattered by the adventure, which made a great noise in society; and several sentimental ladies blamed me for not having testified on that occasion more sensibility for a lover worthy of the days of ancient chivalry. This act of his convinced me, that he had really done for me all the ridiculous things which he had told me. One of my friends, who was very young and pretty, spoke to me about him one day, and about his sentiments for me, with a warmth and vivacity that surprised me, and in the course of her eulogy, she added, that he was the

most delicate and the most virtuous man upon earth. She saw that I thought she exaggerated greatly, and cried out, "I cannot refrain from disclosing to you all his worth, and I am now going to sacrifice all my self-love to the pleasure of awakening you to the esteem and admiration which such a character as his must inspire." She then told me, that before his passion for me became public, she had herself conceived for him a violent attachment, and that in an unguarded moment, thinking herself beloved in return, she had confessed her affection for him; that he then threw himself at her feet, and implored her pity and her friendship; declared that his affections were no longer in his own power, and that he had conceived the most violent and unhappy passion for me. She extolled for a quarter of an hour the beauty and the frankness of this conduct; and I confessed that I thought it handsome, though I could not help indulging the *evil thought* that the viscount, knowing the warmth and candour of the young person's disposition, was quite sure that she would confide the grand secret to me, and that at the same time, she would take care to conceal it from Madame de Custines, whose austerity she dreaded extremely.

The viscount remained a year in Corsica, and behaved in the most distinguished manner. I met him again, as I have already mentioned, at the masked-

ball at Versailles. I shall now take up once more the thread of his history. From the time of my entrance at the Palais Royal, he spoke no more of his former sentiments; and in return, if I did not treat him with confidence, I displayed an interest the most sincere in his welfare. One evening I told him that I was extremely uneasy about Madame de Mérode, who, in her last letter from Brussels, had mentioned that her health was very precarious; and as two posts had arrived since the letter reached me, I was alarmed lest she should have really fallen dangerously ill. The viscount listened without answering, and left the room precipitately. The second day after, at noon, he entered my cabinet unexpectedly, in boots, with a riding-whip in one hand and a note in the other. "There, madam," said he, "is a note from Madame de Mérode, which will inform you that she has in reality been ill, but that she is quite well now; I saw her lying on her sofa." "What!" said I, "have you been to Brussels?"—"Certainly;" rejoined he, "you were uneasy. On quitting you, I went and got a post-horse, and rode to Brussels without stopping. I stayed no longer in Brussels than to see Madame de Mérode; and I have come back with the same speed: but read the letter." I was excessively touched; I read the letter which confirmed in every point the exact truth of the viscount's story. Madame de Mérode expressed a

great enthusiasm about my elegant courier, and I was myself moved even to tears. He believed at last that he had found the way to touch my heart; and a few days after, coming purposely at an hour when he knew I should be alone, he threw himself at my feet, and spoke again of his love with the most alarming impetuosity, threatening to commit suicide if I did not return it. His threats and his fury undid the effect of his previous conduct, and filled me with an indignation which gave me all the calmness I had need of. I was near the chimney-piece; I pulled the bell, and the viscount started up like a madman. A valet de chambre entered; to whom I said, with great coolness, "Light M. de Custines down stairs." It was night, but I knew that the lamps of the corridors of the Palais Royal were not yet lighted: he left the house with demonstrations of fury, which had all the character of despair, and in spite of the courage which I had just exhibited, it left behind an impression of fear and horror, which remained all the evening. The next morning on awaking, I received a note from him which made me shudder; the date was thus expressed at the top of the page:

August 23d, the last day of my existence.

The note, which consisted but of four lines, breathed the most fearful despair, and expressed

a decided intention to hasten his end. No words can describe the feelings of horror with which I was seized, or the remorse I felt for having treated him with so much neglect. I thought I ought to have shown, when he threatened to kill himself, at least uneasiness and compassion. I remained for more than an hour as if petrified, and bitterly deploring the disastrous event; at last I wrote to the Count de Custines, to ask news of his brother, who lived in his house. Instead of replying, the count came immediately, and as soon as he entered my room, I saw on his face the confirmation of the terrible truth. He told me that his brother had left the house alone at four in the morning without a servant, and without any kind of preparation, merely leaving a note of two lines, which he showed me, which only desired the family not to expect his return, and saying, that no one should ever know where he was gone. The Count de Custines, who had an excellent heart, was plunged in the deepest affliction, and continually repeated, "Such is the fate to which you have driven him!" I, myself, was so shocked and afflicted that for a whole week I was unable to go to the Palais Royal. I received no visitors but the Count de Custines, who came to see me daily. He made every exertion to discover what had become of his brother, but without success. We agreed to conceal this tragical history as long as possible, and merely to say that the

viscount was gone into Switzerland. At length, I recommenced my ordinary occupations, and went as usual to walk in the Palais Royal every morning with my two daughters, the eldest of whom was six years old. A few days after, I observed an Armenian or Turk, (as I judged by his dress, his long beard, aud his turban) who followed me constantly, fixing his eyes continually on my face. I saw this personage for a fortnight together, after which he appeared no more. In the beginning of October I went to Chantilly; from whence I did not return till the middle of November. The Count de Custines was in Lorraine; the month following I received a note from him, couched nearly in these terms:

"Let us no longer lament the *despairing lover*, he is come to life again; this evening I shall come and detail to my dear comforter (this was the name he always gave me after the death of his wife) all the details of so marvellous an adventure."

Upon reading this note my first emotion was of joy—and my second a sense of humbled self-love, for having believed the story of the pretended suicide. The count passed the whole evening with me, and gave me a long narrative of the affair of which the following are the principal events.

The viscount wandered into the forest of Senard, determined, as he said, to finish at once his torments and his existence, and fixed upon this desert spot to

execute his fatal resolution, in order that no one might ever know where he had ended his days. At the very moment when, in the depths of the forest, he was about *to sacrifice himself*, a hermit appeared, who arrested him in his project, and persuaded him to come to his hermitage. There was in reality in that forest a vast hermitage, where several assembled hermits worked in common, at weaving in the loom silk stockings and various fancy stuffs, which were much in vogue, and sold well in Paris. The viscount, restored to *reason* and *religion*, passed in reality three or four months in that hermitage incognito, and his hosts believed that in his person they had worked the most wonderful conversion imaginable. On the viscount's return, the count had the curiosity to pay a visit to these hermits; he talked to them of his brother, whom these worthy persons regarded as a saint; they assured him that he had exactly followed their pious practices, and that he had even laboured with them at their work. They praised his mildness, his simplicity, and his candour. They told how generously he had behaved towards them—that besides the payment of his board, he had sent them an ample provision of silk for their labours. I am convinced that he amused himself greatly at the hermitage; for he had so much duplicity in his character, that he delighted in playing the hypocrite, even when he had neither interest nor aim in doing so. To re-

turn to his history. He quitted the hermitage for a short time; in a week after his arrival there, he concealed himself elsewhere, in order to have an opportunity of walking daily in the Palais Royal disguised as an Armenian. It was in fact the viscount himself whom I had seen. He wished to know what impression the report of his death had made upon me. He was much disappointed at seeing me neither altered nor grown thin. He told his brother that my cruelty, joined to his long residence at the hermitage, had cured him; that he could never see me again without emotion, and that he would always take a lively interest in my welfare, but that he had renounced at last and for ever a passion which had produced so much unhappiness.

After listening to this narrative, which was lengthened by several details which I suppress, I obliged the count to acknowledge that we had both been completely dupes in lamenting him so much; and that his pretended resolution of destroying himself had been only a feint (and of the least pardonable description) to try my real sentiments for him. Some days afterwards, the viscount came to sup at the Palais Royal; I was present; he affected an emotion, by which several ladies were strongly touched, who were acquainted with his chivalrous love for me, his campaign in Corsica, and had even heard something of the project of his pretended suicide. This latter

fact was related as certain, but with many variations, every one more touching than another. He appeared in every one's eyes, a genuine hero of romance. He carried this kind of interest to the highest pitch; when in playing at whist with me, he displayed a nervous trembling of the hands, and so much absence of mind, that he mixed the cards, renounced, and threw the whole game into disorder. All this appeared so completely a piece of acting in my opinion, that I was positively angry. A sentimental lady, who was of our party, was exceedingly indignant at the air of mockery with which I regarded the viscount's behaviour; she said it was *monstrous*. I learned afterwards that she employed this expression in relating the scene.

Two days afterwards, at ten in the morning, I was told that the Count de Custines begged me to do him the favour of receiving him, as he had something of importance to tell me. I was still in bed; but I desired that the count might be requested to step into my closet; I then rose in haste, and went to him. I was struck with the change I saw in his features. "Good God!" cried I, "what is the matter?"—"Ah!" replied he, "I am come to tell you an instance of the blackest and most horrible perfidy."—"And of whom?"—"Of the greatest villain that ever existed—of the viscount."—"Your own brother! . . . . and what has he done?"—"He has deceived you; he never loved you; he was playing the traitor to me,

and endeavouring to seduce my wife, all the while that he pretended to have the most violent passion for you!"—"Is it possible?"—"Listen to the facts: Madame de Custines left behind her a little box in which I knew she kept all the letters she wished to preserve; I never could find the key of it; and besides I had no desire to open it, for I dreaded the impression that these letters would make upon me, which were addressed to her at a time when I was so happy! However, as you had several times requested me to return *your* letters, I determined this morning to send for a locksmith, who opened the box; I then took out all the letters, which consisted only of your's, those of Madame de Louvois, and Madame d'Harville's. In examining the box however more particularly, I discovered by its thickness that it must have a concealed drawer; and feeling every where for the secret of opening it, I at last touched the spring, which discovered a very deep receptacle, filled with an infinite number of notes and letters from my brother, all expressing in the most impassioned language a love which he declares to be *the most pure*, but who at the same time employs all imaginable means of seduction. It is plainfrom these letters that Madame de Custines has never for a moment swerved from her duty, nor given him a shadow of encouragement, and that her answers have always been in the severest tone. It is evident that she had constantly forbidden him to

write, and that generally she did not reply to his letters; on these occasions he threatens to go to the utmost extremities, to confess the whole to me, and to kill himself. He speaks to her frequently of you: he tells her that he pretends to be your admirer, in order the better to conceal his real sentiments; but," pursued the count, "I have brought you some of the letters in which you are mentioned; here they are—read them." I seized the letters, which I read, I confess, with as much vexation as anger. In the first which I opened, he replied thus to the reproaches which Madame de Custines threw out, relative to the arts which he was employing to attract me.

"At least," said he, "my pretended passion does not interrupt her tranquillity; provided she is amused, cajoled, and flattered, she desires nothing farther; her vanity, as far as her talents are concerned, and even her levity alone, will always supply with her the place of prudence, and prevent her from ever feeling a profound passion."

In another letter, about his departure for Corsica, he wrote, in these precise words:

"I am glad that every body thinks that it is love for her which sends me to Corsica; but you who, possessing a soul so great, and so full of feeling, are only alarmed, not *touched*, at my project, how can you apprehend for her the *dangerous impression* to which you allude? Trust for other results to her

vanity; and be convinced, that supposing herself the object of my devotion, she will consider my action as quite natural, and a thing of course."

I read these two articles two or three times successively, and wrote them out the same evening, on two small pieces of paper, which I inserted in some letters, *of the same date*, which I had received from this new Lovelace, infinitely more artful and wicked than the hero of Richardson. What must have been my despair and my misery, had I not been preserved from his seductions by the instinct which has always enabled me to detect falsehood! . . . What should I have suffered had I loved him! . . . We could not recover from our surprise, in thinking with what audacity and confidence he had written to his sister-in-law and to me at the same time, letters equally impassioned! But he knew us both thoroughly; he was sure that such a secret would never be divulged by his sister-in-law, and that my timidity, my habitual reserve, and the imposing severity of Madame de Custines, would never allow me to show her these letters, nor even to allude to them. It was difficult for me to moderate the violence of the just resentment of the Count de Custines; but I reasoned with him so long, that he gave me his word, (which he never violated) to burn all these letters, and not to say a word about them to his brother, nor to any one existing. I should never

have succeeded in making him adopt this generous resolution, had it not been for the sake of the memory of Madame de Custines; he knew the world well enough to be convinced, that if the story once became public it would be related in a thousand different ways, and that, in spite of the perfect innocence of Madame de Custines, the respect which every one had for her memory would be violated by some unreflecting persons, who cannot bear the notion of an approach to perfection.

The count, faithful to his promise, lived with the viscount on the same terms as before, continuing to give him apartments in his house; so that his brother never suspected that he possessed the knowledge of so terrible a secret. This conduct cost a great effort to his virtuous brother for more than six months; but at last he altogether succeeded in forgetting the outrage of which he had pretended to be ignorant; and I have even witnessed, in the end, the renewal of his sincere friendship for the perfidious brother who had so unworthily deceived him. If at the first discovery he had publicly broken with him, and reproached him with his crime, they must have remained irreconcileable for the rest of their lives.

It is extraordinary that Madame de Custines, one of the purest and most religious persons that ever existed, should have received these criminal letters. As I have already said, she must have been inti-

midated by the fearful menaces of the viscount; but she ought doubtless to have had enough of decision and firmness to defy his resentment; nothing ought to excuse us from fulfilling a positive duty. Another inexplicable circumstance is, that Madame de Custines should not have burnt these letters before her death. But I have related the facts with the most scrupulous exactness.

From that time, I never saw the Viscount de Custines at my house; I only met him at the Palais Royal, at the Prince of Conti's or the Palais Bourbon, to which he afterwards belonged, in quality of captain of the guards to the prince of Condé. Three or four years after our quarrel I had the measles, which reduced me almost to the last extremity. At this time the viscount was to have gone to pass a fortnight at London with M. de Buzançai. Upon learning the state in which I was, he exhibited the greatest signs of grief, broke off his intended journey in the most public manner, allowed M. de Buzançai to go alone, saying, that he could not quit Paris while he knew I was dying; he accordingly remained, and during the whole time that I was in danger, he passed daily whole hours in my antichamber, softening the hearts of my domestics by his demonstrations of grief and disquietude. It was thus that he preserved his reputation of a genuine hero of romance; and what is more, faithful

to his imaginary passion, even to his death, he never discovered any other attachment; he constantly repeated, that after a passion so singular and so unfortunate, there was no place in his heart for a new love, and that he never would marry. It is impossible to conceive how much I was blamed for not being touched with this romantic passion; it was thought, that without partaking it, I should at least have shown a profound sentiment of esteem for the man *who could love thus*. But when I was spoken to on the subject in a pathetic vein, I could not help laughing, and shrugging my shoulders. It has been often repeated, that all this was in bad taste, from which *a good heart* would have preserved me. This adventure, so singular and so true, is an admirable lesson for young females, who are in general so well disposed to believe that they have the power of inspiring sentiments which affect *the destiny of their lives.*

I shall now pursue the continuation of my history.

After passing six months at the Palais Royal, I had experienced so many marks of calumny and malignity, that I resolved to withdraw myself from it for some time. The Duchess of Chartres had, of her own accord, conceived a strong friendship for me; she sent for me continually, when alone, in her own apartments—a distinction which, with my habitual reserve, I should never have thought of soliciting, and which she never accorded to any other

lady. My conversation and my vivacity pleased her, and I became attached to her from her goodness, candour, and sensibility. She was told many malignant things about me, but she always refused to believe them; she saw such a spirit of animosity against me, that she easily recognised the ill-disguised and passionate language of envy. She told me all these stories, and found me not only moderate, but I venture to say generous, towards my detractors, and I never recriminated. I never said any thing to her against the women whom she denounced to me as my mortal enemies; and even after that time, I never let slip an opportunity of doing a service with the duchess to these very persons.

This behaviour was duly appreciated by the Duchess of Chartres, who became attached to me with a kind of passion which lasted in all its strength more than fifteen years; and I can say, with perfect truth, that my heart responded to it with all the energy and devotion of which I am capable where I love. This was the first motive of the ardent jealousy of which I was the object, for nine years, at the Palais Royal.

Wearied out with malignity and calumny, I determined on taking a little journey, in hopes that my absence, in the commencement of my favouritism, would prove that I had no envy of commanding. I had long promised Madame de Mérode to go to see

her at Brussels. I requested M. de Genlis to take me thither; I demanded leave of absence, and we set out in the middle of winter. I felt once more at my ease in seeing a charming friend, who thought of nothing but how to make my stay at Brussels agreeable. Prince Charles, the emperor's brother, was then viceroy of the Low Countries. This prince was amiable in his manners, and a lover of talent and the arts; he received me most graciously. Madame de Mérode's house was large. We lived with her; and at her house we saw the best society of the town—among others, the Prince and Princess of Staremberg. The latter, though little, ugly, and humpbacked, was pleasing, from a countenance full of talent and expression. I have never met with any one who had a more amusing manner of narrating, a more agreeable conversation, or a wit more piquant. She has inspired many profound passions, which have been equally constant and unhappy. The Prince of Chimay, young and handsome, was desperately in love with her, and had remained two years at Brussels in consequence of that attachment. The wittiest man, and the most in fashion, at Prince Charles's court, was the Prince de Ligne, who had passed a great part of his life at Paris, and whom I already knew. He had a noble face, and noble manners; he was good-natured and gay; he affected singularity, yet he was very ingenuous; his disposi-

sition was honourable; and particularly gracious. The Duchess of Ursel, daughter of the beautiful and virtuous Duchess of Aremberg, was then in the flower of her youth; a brilliant freshness of complexion, and an agreeable expression of face, supplied in her the place of beauty; she was charming for her gaiety, her good-nature, and an equality of temper, which was never ruffled. Madame d'Ursel, by means of blackening her fair hair, turning up the point of her nose with a hair, and hiding her fine teeth with an orange-skin cut for the purpose, passed herself off upon me for a Dutch lady, recently arrived from the Hague. I was taken to Antwerp to see the pictures, and several curious manufactories. We passed three months in this manner, which, to me, glided away in a delightful manner. I had my leave of absence prolonged for more than six weeks. At length I returned to the Palais Royal, there to encounter the same enmities. A few days after my arrival we went to the Isle-Adam, to the Prince of Conti's.* I was particularly fond of this prince's house, because you there enjoyed the most perfect

* I have already drawn his portrait, but I have omitted in it trait peculiarly characteristic, and which is extremely advantageous to princes and people in power. He exacted, from all who were about him, a rigorous respect to his rank; but this did not prevent him from showing constantly the most amiable affability.—*(Note by the Author.)*

liberty. The prince never appeared in the saloon until the evening, two hours before supper. When he did not go to the chase, he passed the day in the apartments of Madame de Boufflers. The ladies were all at liberty to dine in their rooms, and to remain there till supper-time. The Prince of Conti, then fifty years old, had a handsome and majestic face; he had displayed great valour and talent as a soldier. Being the ardent protector of all who belonged to him, he had sincere friends; and he was the only prince of the blood who spoke well in parliament, or who had ease and grace in his audiences. He loved the arts, sciences, and literature; and he has been called the last of the princes, as Brutus was styled the last of the Romans. The stag-hunts were peculiarly agreeable at the Isle-Adam; at each halt there was an entertainment, and, during our little journeys, we acted plays once a week.

The Countess of Boufflers, the intimate friend of the Prince of Conti, passed for being the most witty person in our society; she had written several dramas and comedies, which have never been printed. She has been accused of maintaining in conversation singular opinions and paradoxes; I have never found any thing of the kind in her talk; I have always thought her as remarkable for her understanding as her wit, but she was never common-place; and this is, doubtless, what some people call singularity. I

esteemed her highly; she, Madame de Beauvau, Madame de Puisieux, and the Maréchale de Luxembourg, have always appeared to me to be perfect models of amiability, politeness, and grace.

I did not lose any time at the Isle-Adam. There was a fine library there; and I read, for the first time I believe, Rabelais, of whose works I thought three-fourths extravagant, absurd, and disgusting; whatever else in him may seem to be wit, is not sufficient to establish the reputation of a work; I also read over and over a great number of memoirs, relative to the history of France, and made many extracts. An amiable old man, M. de Pont de Vesle, nephew of the famous Madame de Tencin,* improved me much by his conversation; he was greatly attached to me, and took much pleasure in replying to all my questions, and in acquainting me with many literary anecdotes.

On my return to Paris, I renewed my studies with more ardour than ever. I added to my other occupations, that of painting flowers in miniature. Ma-

* Greater political events have thrown somewhat into the shade this extraordinary woman, who after taking the vows, got them disannulled and entered into a convent of canonesses; and having thus obtained the right of frequently quitting the chapter, she passed the greater part of her life at Paris, where her house became the rendezvous of the most talented society of the capital. —(*Note by the Editor.*)

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SAR

dame de Puisieux had begged me to give her a little snuff-box, very light and very common, which might lie always on her work. I painted for the lid of a box, a cypher in flowers, surrounded with a wreath, which I had put upon a box of fig-tree wood. This little trifle was thought so pretty, that all my friends begged me for boxes, and I accordingly made more than a dozen successively. There was no want of books at the Palais Royal. It is singular, that the Duke of Orleans, who possessed such magnificent collections of gems and pictures, should have had no library; but the Chevalier de Durfort had a well-selected library, from which he lent me all the books I wanted. One of the things which attached me the most to my readings, was the regularity with which I made extracts, and the great pleasure I felt in constantly adding to the number. I was, by this time, far advanced in my knowledge of French literature and history. I had conceived a taste for natural history in my visits to Chantilly. The fine cabinet of the Prince of Condé, and the friendship of the excellent and learned M. de Bomare,* who had the care of it, gave me the desire of forming a little cabinet of my own. I knew very little of geography, and begged M. de Bomare to find me a mistress of it. He sent me Mademoiselle Thouin,

* A celebrated naturalist, and author of a dictionary of natural history.—(*Note by the Editor.*)

sister of the head gardener of the royal garden, then one of the first botanists in Europe, and since received, (before the revolution,) a member of the Academy of Sciences. Mademoiselle Thouin was a young person who had read much and was very amiable. We became much attached to each other, and our attachment lasted till I went to Belle Chasse, and was only broken off by an unjust feeling on the part of Mademoiselle Thouin, which I shall mention afterwards. I persuaded the Duchess of Chartres to learn geography, and thus procured for Mademoiselle Thouin an illustrious scholar, who remained under her three years. The Duchess of Chartres had been educated at a convent by the old and virtuous Marchioness of Sourcy, who had given her what is more valuable than graces or talents—she had instilled into her noble heart the best principles and the highest sense of religion. In other respects, as Madame de Sourcy was ill-informed herself, she was not qualified to instruct her pupil, who was even ignorant of spelling. I undertook to teach her orthography, and gave her lessons for more than eighteen months; I also taught her history and mythology. A painter who had taken the portraits of my daughters, spoke to me of a young Pole, called M. Méris, who was in the greatest misery, and who had a great talent (which afterwards became celebrated) for painting small subjects in water colours mixed with gum. I bethought myself of having

painted by this artist, for the instruction of the Duchess of Chartres, a series of small historical pictures, representing the most striking events of Grecian and Roman history, which I selected from my Extracts. He furnished four of these per month, for which the Duchess of Chartres only paid eighteen francs a piece, which was really getting them for nothing. She caused them to be framed as they came, and on the back of each I wrote, in a very small hand, the explanation of the picture at length. She got thus one hundred and fifteen, which she hung in a cabinet; they were admired by all those who saw; I had them arranged in chronological order. She afterwards gave me those little pictures for the instruction of Mademoiselle d'Orleans. Madame de Valence, during the emigration saved them from confiscation, and I allowed her to keep them for the education of her daughters. She divided them; Madame de Celles has the greater part of this precious collection.

Besides all these occupations, I served also as secretary to the Duchess of Chartres; I wrote out all her notes and letters, which she afterwards copied in her own hand. Nothing occurred more remarkable than the ordinary events of the day, which she did not communicate to me; she would send for me to ask my advice, or to confide to me any thing that interested her. It has often happened that she has sent Mademoiselle Lefevre, one of her attendants, at

two or three in the morning, when I had not seen her during the day, to entreat me to write a note or a letter for her, which she had to send early in the morning. As I went to bed late, I was in general awake; but several times she has had to awake me. On these occasions the Duchess of Chartres would write to me at great length about whatever she required of me; sometimes it was only to communicate to me something that gave her uneasiness; and in these cases, unless it was very late, I used to go down stairs to her. All this did not hinder me from keeping my fingers employed; from making pretty embroidery of all kinds, and from cultivating music with the same ardour as before. To these I joined my new study of natural history, the formation of a cabinet of shells, of madrepores,* of minerals and stones, which became by degrees a fine collection, and which was afterwards confiscated, and well sold *for the benefit of the nation,* along with all I possessed at Belle Chasse. I continued to write comedies; I had composed at Madame de Puisieux's one called *False Delicacy,* which I had never shewn to any one, not even to M. de Sauvigny; he was so prejudiced in my favour, that though he had an excellent critical taste, I mistrusted his praises. Wishing, however, to know if I possessed any talent, I took a singular me-

* A kind of petrified sea-plant. (*Translator.*)

thod of ascertaining the point. I was a subscriber to the *Année Littéraire* of Fréron; I discovered in that work a great deal of talent and sound judgment, and I determined on consulting Fréron, whom I did not at all know personally. I wrote an anonymous letter to him, signed "A Young Author." I begged him to read the comedy I sent him; to give me his opinion freely on the subject, and to advise me relative to my pursuance of that branch of writing. I requested him to send his answer with my piece to his booksellers', to whom I should apply for an answer in a fortnight. I sent the packet to the booksellers', and in a fortnight it was returned to the messenger who called for it. Fréron's reply was very full and polite; he said, that there was a good deal of the tone of Marivaux in my piece; that it was evident I had read that author often, and that I esteemed him much; he advised me to leave off imitation, and to write in my own manner; and added that I had *good ideas, a clever talent, and above all, an excellent judgment, and the faculty of forming a good plot.*

This criticism proved very useful to me; it encouraged me greatly, and made me renounce the style of Marivaux for ever. I had never any other correspondence with Fréron.

When summer came, we went to Chantilly, where the Prince of Condé paid me the most particular at-

tention. He always sat next me at table, and asked me what I wished to be done the next day; if I wished that we should sup at the Island of Sylvia, or the Island of Love, or at the Rendezvous of the Stag-hunt, &c. &c. All this gallantry had nothing in it peculiarly flattering; it was an essay which the prince always tried with all the women who had any thing agreeable about them; it was said that he did this to forward a system of ambition. He used to say, that a pretty woman is always of use in an intrigue, and that there is only *one way* of making sure of her. As *that way* did not suit me, as soon as I discovered the prince's design, I let him understand, that he had no hope of succeeding with me. From this time he became my enemy, and has remained so. The Prince of Condé, was then thirty-five or thirty-six years old; he was blind of one eye,* but the eye which was blind had nothing defective in its appearance.† His face was better than bad; but it had something false in its expression, which was perfectly characteristic of his disposition, than which nothing could be more deceitful. He had displayed in the field a valour

* The duke, father of the Prince of Condé, was rendered blind of an eye, in consequence of an accident in hunting; and all his children, legitimate and natural, were born blind of the same eye. This is a fact difficult to account for.—(*Note by the Author.*)

† The eye became disfigured as he grew old.—(*Note by the Author.*)

worthy of the grandson of the great Condé, and this gave him great weight in the army. All the soldiers respected him; he has always acted the noble part of their protector, and solicited favours and regiments, even for those he did not know, when they addressed their requests to him, and when he saw that their claims were well-founded. This prince was not destitute of talent; he wrote well, and his conversation, when he was at his ease with you, was agreeable: nevertheless, he was awkward in general society, and spoke badly in public; he was ambitious; but it was rather the ambition of a courtier than a prince; and he employed small arts and intrigues for his purposes, which he ought to have disdained. He was exceedingly vindictive, and had a sort of pleasure in hating; he is the only man I have ever seen wear a constant smile when you spoke to him of a person whom he hated, or when he saw that person; this smile was quite hideous; no words can give an idea of it.

The Duke of Bourbon had a fine shape, and the fineness of his complexion stood him instead of beauty; he has always shown himself full of kindness towards me.

The Duchess of Bourbon was of this party; she had infinite grace, wit, and accomplishments; she had a fine disposition, but a singularity in her ideas which her instructress had never rectified, and which deprived her of the faculty of seeing and judging

things correctly. Having been greatly prejudiced against me by Madame de Barbantane, she treated me with extreme coldness; I never endeavoured to remove her prejudices, which lasted up to the revolution; since that time, her kindness to me has amply made up for her previous injustice.

The following winter, I met with a great interruption in my private studies; Gluck came to Paris to have his operas performed. The boxes of the Palais Royal opened into the apartments of the palace; on leaving table, I had only to open a door of the dining-room to pass into the boxes. This convenience, my fondness for music, and the extreme pleasure I had in seeing Gluck,* at the rehearsals, get into a fury with the actors and musicians, giving them, at the same time, the most judicious instructions, induced me to pass all my afternoons in one of the boxes; afterwards, I went to see the piece performed, so that a great part of my time was passed at the opera. Gluck came twice a week with Monsigny, M. de Monville, and Jarnovitz, the famous violin player, to perform music at my apartments; he made me sing all his fine airs, and play his overtures on the harp, especially that to *Iphigenia*, of which I was excessive-

* Without voice or execution, Gluck is quite ravishing when he sings his fine airs to the piano. Genius has no need of art, at least, it can do without it. When we are profoundly touched, what do we want more?—(*Note by the Author.*)

ly fond. It may be easily supposed that I declared myself a Gluckist, and that I ridiculed all the disputes about Gluck and Piccini, by men of letters who did not know a single note of music; this raised up my first literary enemies, for I was a kind of musical authority in society, and the literary partizans of Gluck never pardoned me, being of their party, for ridiculing them; but they defended Gluck so absurdly, that I spared them no more than the rest. Towards March in this winter, however, I felt that music, Gluck, and the opera, acquired much too great an ascendant over me. As it has always appeared to me much easier to *renounce* an object altogether, than to *moderate the pursuit of it*, I made a resolution to go no more to the opera or the theatres, but when I should be obliged, from my situation, to go there with the Duchess of Chartres—a thing which happened rarely, as my companions desired nothing better than to replace me on these occasions. This was a great sacrifice to me, but I kept my vow most faithfully. I sincerely wish now, that religion had been my motive in this resolution; but it was only the taste for study, and the pride of being distinguished that led me to make this determination.

I saw this year the Count Benyowski, so famous for his exile to Siberia and the manner in which he made his escape, by putting forty of his comrades in his confidence, persuading each privately that he was

his only confident; the secret was thus perfectly well kept, as each fancied himself the only depositary of it. He related to me all his adventures, which furnished me with the subject of a drama, which met with great success in Germany, and which I have since seen played at Hamburg. I had an opportunity the autumn following to render a great service to the Chevalier de Durfort, in the following manner. He was a knight of Malta, and was allowed to hold benefices; an ecclesiastic of my acquaintance came to inform me, that there was one vacant of fifteen thousand francs a-year, in the gift, I know not how, of the Count d'Artois, and that, if it was solicited immediately the chevalier would have it. The count was then at Fontainebleau, and I instantly sent off a courier to the Duke of Chartres, to acquaint him with the fact. The duke, without losing a moment, made the demand, obtained the favour, and announced his success to the chevalier, who was then at Fontainebleau, showing him at the same time my note. The Chevalier de Durfort, who was not rich, was overwhelmed with joy at receiving a gift so unexpected, and which had not even cost him a single solicitation; he wrote me a letter full of gratitude, in which he styled me his benefactress. He was, in fact, extremely grateful for seven or eight years, but afterwards he became my enemy; it will be seen that I gave no reason for such a change.

The Countess of Nolstein made her entrance to the Palais Royal about this time; she was fifteen, and had a pretty face, but ugly feet, and hands that were quite frightful, from their size, their shape, and their redness; she was the daughter of Madame de Barbantane, and had been brought up at a convent with the Duchess of Bourbon, who, on leaving Panthemont, decidedly refused to accept her as her maid of honour. It was generally said and believed that the Duchess of Bourbon refused her through envy of her handsome face,—a thing notoriously impossible, as she took in her place a lady much prettier than Madame du Nolstein; but she was, nevertheless, excessively blamed for ingratitude in refusing to accept the daughter of her governess. The Duchess of Bourbon could not but know how much she was talked of; but she had enough of self-command never to relate the real cause of her refusal to any person whatever; nor did she ever tell it till fourteen or fifteen years afterwards, when Madame du Nolstein was shut up in a convent at Nancy. The Duchess of Bourbon had a witness of the fact she related, in the Princess Louisa of Condé, her sister-in-law, who kept the same strict silence. Madame du Nolstein, on entering the Palais Royal became my most ardent enemy; she has done me much harm; I have seen strange things in her conduct, of which I shall say nothing; the most notorious of her adventures are but too well

known to the public, but the sincerity of her repentance imposes on me an obligation not to retrace them.

Her conduct in the convent to which she retired, during a considerable number of years, was so edifying and so perfect, that there could be no doubt of her conversion. Her food, during all this time, was precisely that ordained by the rule of the most austere orders; she sold, for the benefit of the poor, several jewels which she still had, and the whole of her wardrobe; she bought for herself the coarsest linen, and the roughest garments, and wore no other kind of dress till her death. M. du Nolstein, one of the most honourable and virtuous of men, allowed her a pension of six thousand francs, and paid, besides, her board and lodging: Madame du Nolstein, out of this reserved, at most, three hundred francs for her nourishment, and distributed the rest among the poor, with the exception of the purchase of the necessary materials for making with her own hands, various works, which she gave to the church; at these she was very clever, and she consecrated her talent in this way entirely to religion. When the nuns, at the revolution, were driven from their abodes, M. du Nolstein, after the reign of terror, took his way to an estate which he possessed at a great distance from Paris. Madame du Nolstein entreated him to allow her to continue to live there as she did in her convent; she died there

in eighteen months, preserving her senses to the last moment of her existence; she had herself placed on ashes when she felt herself dying, and it was thus, that, after having expiated all her past errors, she heaved her last sigh! . . . . I forgot to mention, that when she was driven from her convent with the rest, she withdrew herself to a fifth floor, where she lived with some poor persons, whose misery she had formerly alleviated; she remained their till after the death of Robespierre.

I frequently saw M. de Fleurieu,* who was afterwards in the ministry; he made me recommence the Italian, which he perfectly understood, and in which, in spite of his numerous occupations, he had the goodness to give me lessons regularly twice a week during six months. I never knew any person of so obliging a disposition; he was exceedingly ingenious, and could make watches like a watchmaker: he undertook the cleaning and regulation of all those of his friends; he understood turning, and could do besides many pretty things. One day in calling on me, he found me engaged in trimming with flowers a gown, which I was to wear the next day, along with my maid, and a milliner's apprentice. As I was quite undecided on the arrangement of my trimming, M.

* The Count de Fleurieu was Minister of the Navy under Louis XVI.

de Fleurieu gave his opinion, which was followed. He then set to work, cutting and sewing as well as the best work-woman, and all this with a seriousness and simplicity which made me ready to die with laughing: he reprimanded me for my levity, saying that it occasioned loss of time. I had fastened the door, and we worked with great energy from seven in the evening till one in the morning, only interrupted by a slight supper which did not last a quarter of an hour. The gown was finished, and met with the greatest admiration the next day; every body thought it charming. There was something very remarkable in M. de Fleurieu's history; he was successively in love with three women of three different generations; first, in his early youth, of a woman much older than himself; next of her daughter, who was married to M. de Mondorge, (uncle of M. de Fleurieu.) This passion was a most unhappy one. Madame de Mondorge, on becoming a widow, married the Marquis of Arcamballe; she had a daughter whom M. de Fleurieu saw born. As soon as she had attained a marriageable age, M. de Fleurieu fell in love with, and married her. This is a constancy of *filiation* of which I know no other example.

I had also taken an English master; and as I had a very strong memory, I read the poets easily in five months. I never lost a moment; when I went to Versailles, I generally managed to go alone, in order

that I might be able to read in the coach. I wrote out all my extracts in small white paper books; and I always carried one about me, that I might read something in moments that would otherwise have been lost. I have never let slip an opportunity of leading into conversation any persons I have met who could teach me any thing; foreigners on their country, travellers on their journeys, artists on their arts, &c. &c. In this way, I have contrived to get something out of many persons in other respects extremely insipid; and I wrote down the same day all that I had collected in these conversations that was interesting or new to me. I had heard it said, that M. d'Aguesseau had written in a few years, four volumes quarto, in employing the twelve or fifteen minutes a day which Madame d'Aguesseau occupied in arranging her dress before coming down to dinner: I profited by this example; the hour of dinner at the Palais Royal was fixed for two, but the Duchess of Chartres was never ready for a quarter of an hour later, and when I came down at the appointed hour, I was always obliged to wait fifteen or twenty minutes. I desired a domestic to come and tell me when she left her room. I was always quite ready at two precisely; and up to the time when I was summoned, I spent the time in writing in a distinct and very small hand, a selection of poetry from various authors, which formed when I left the Palais Royal, a collec-

tion of one thousand verses, very curious, as it begins with the poetry the oldest and most Gothic which we possess. This collection which has not been lost, is now in the hands of the Countess of Choiseul (formerly Princess of Bauffremont). I had in the course of three years completely drained the library of M. de Durfort. I formed an acquaintance with the Abbé des Aulnais, chief librarian of the Royal Library; he showed me the most obliging kindness for six years, pointing out and lending me all the books which could give me any instruction, and even manuscripts. I found in his friendship and conversation a source of information which has been of the greatest use to me. I often went to pay him visits at the library, in which he showed me the most curious books. He introduced me to a learned person, M. d'Aimeri, who lived near the Palais Royal, and who possessed a superb collection of antique medals, besides a fine collection of miniatures on enamel by Petitot, which after his death was bought by the king. I went also about once a fortnight to the Garden of Plants, to see my friend Mademoiselle Thouin, who took me into the Cabinet of Natural History, and into the hot-houses, where all the wonders of nature were explained to me. One day while I was with her and Monsieur Thouin her brother in the green-houses, I saw a young man approach about fourteen or fifteen years old, who had

a very handsome face. He came up to me and said that his father was particularly desirous to see me, in order to show me two or three singular little animals which were not in the menagerie; and this father of his was M. de Buffon. I was delighted with this mark of attention from a man whose works I admired so highly; and I owed it to the favourable report which Mademoiselle Thouin had given of me. Young Buffon gave me his arm, and presented me to his father, who received me with a cordiality and a graceful simplicity of manner which entirely gained my heart. From this time he came to see me at the Palais Royal at least once a month; I went to dine with him once every ten or twelve days; I always went early enough to find him alone. We spoke of nothing but literature; and I questioned him continually on his style and manner of writing. One extraordinary circumstance is, that M. de Buffon, whose style is so harmonious, was neither fond of poetry, nor a good judge of it. Fenelon, a less perfect writer, but whose style is so melodious, was an instance of the same singularity. M. de Buffon told me, that he did not begin to write as an author, nor to be remarked till he was forty-four or forty-five years of age; and his admirable talent sustained itself equally up to the close of his long career. At his house I saw many learned men and authors, among

others the unfortunate Bailli, and Hérault de Séchelles,* and M. de Lacépède, so eminent for his knowledge, his talents, and his disposition; in my own apartments, I saw no literary people, except M. de Sauvigny and Dorat, who was then dying of consumption. He came sometimes to see me, as I had known him at Soissons, from meeting him at M. Lepelletier-de-Morfontaine's, where, at the fêtes the latter gave me, he had written some very pretty verses about me,—a thing of which a woman always preserves the remembrance. It is not, however, this feeling, but a sense of justice which makes me assert, that his talents have been too severely criticised; he was doubtless sometimes guilty of affectation, and his style was not formed in a good school, but he was often graceful and delicate, and he had always a great deal of wit. Besides his poetry and his comedies, he has written a novel in letters, which has no reputation, and is altogether forgotten, but which is certainly not without merit. Some have been highly extolled in our days which are far inferior to this production. If Dorat were now living, he would belong to the academy, and would have a great number of admirers.

At the same time Rousseau, who took advantage of the permission I had procured him, divided his

* They died on the scaffold during the Revolution. (*Editor.*)

days between the Garden of Plants and Monceaux. He procured a great many advances to be made to me through Mademoiselle Thouin, who assured me that he expressed a *passionate desire* to see me again; but though in my heart I loved him still, I was inflexible in my refusal.

My various occupations consoled me for the malignity I experienced at the Palais Royal; yet notwithstanding the hatred which many bore to me, I was continually besieged with solicitations to beg of the prince and princess the favours which they desired. I confess that nothing in my life ever flattered me more than this unbounded confidence in the generosity of my disposition, and I never for a moment have ceased to prove that I deserved it. Such conduct is sublime when inspired by religion; when by vanity, it is still noble; but it would be absurd were it the fruit of a plan for mitigating envy; an envious person can never be softened—even the favours he obtains through the object of his hatred can only irritate and humble him the more. It is true that these solicitations always began with little apologies, and long praises of my mildness and my habitual goodness. I was in no respect the dupe of this hypocrisy, but my self-love was highly flattered by such a sort of homage; I felt also a malignant satisfaction at seeing persons so haughty, who talked of nothing but *elevation of soul*, and *nobleness of sentiment*, humbling

themselves thus tête-à-tête before me. I revenged myself in my own way, by listening to them without reproaching them, and by doing what they desired.

In 1774 Louis XV. died; the unfortunate Louis XVI. mounted the throne, which gave an idea that the Palais Royal would enjoy a high credit, because the Princess of Lamballe, who was the intimate friend of the Duke and Duchess of Chartres, was the favourite of the new queen. Madame de Lamballe was extremely pretty, and though her shape wanted elegance, and she had horrid hands, which contrasted strangely from their size, with the delicacy of her face, she was charming without regularity; her disposition was mild, obliging, equal, and gay, but she was totally destitute of talent; her vivacity, her gaiety, and her childish air, concealed her insipidity in an agreeable manner; she never held an opinion of her own, but adopted in conversation the opinion of the person who passed for having the most wit, and this in a manner which was altogether peculiar to herself. When there was a serious discussion, she never opened her lips, but affected absence of mind; and then suddenly appearing to start from her reverie, she repeated, word for word, as from herself, what the speaker had said whose opinion she adopted, and affecting great astonishment when any one told her that the same thing had just been said, she assured every body that she had not heard it. She employed this little con-

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trivance with great address, and it was a long time before I could discover it. She had, besides, a great many little failings which were in fact nothing but childish affectation; the sight of a bouquet of violets would make her faint—as would the sight of a craw-fish or a lobster, even in a picture; on these occasions she would close her eyes, and without changing colour, remain motionless for more than half an hour, in spite of all the assistance which was afforded her, though nobody believed in these pretended fainting fits. I saw her faint in this manner in Holland, in Mr. Hope's cabinet, on casting her eyes on a small Flemish picture, representing a woman selling lobsters. Another time at Crécy at the Duke of Penthièvre's, after supper, I was sitting by her on a sofa, while Mademoiselle Bagarotti was telling ghost stories; suddenly she heard a domestic in the antiroom yawn aloud, as if awaking. Madame de Lamballe affected so much emotion at this that she fell *fainting* upon me, and remained so for such a length of time, that we sent to awake M. Guenault, the duke's surgeon, who came running down stairs in his dressing gown. As the *fainting fit* continued, and I was very anxious to go to bed, I proposed aloud to M. Guenault who was a fool, to bleed the princess in the foot, being quite certain that she would recover from her fit before the bleeding. M. Guenault objected that it would be right to wait somewhat longer on account of sup-

per; but I told him I had remarked that the princess had scarcely eaten any thing. Upon this, without hesitation, M. Guenault ordered hot water, and with an air of triumph (for bleeding the princess was a glorious exploit for him,) he proposed to go and wake M. de Penthièvre, who always went to bed before us: but this I opposed. At last the bason of hot water arrived: M. Guenault took out his lancet, when *suddenly* and *unexpectedly* the princess recovered her senses. I have seen her act a thousand scenes of this kind. Afterwards when periodic attacks of the nerves came into fashion, Madame de Lamballe never failed to have two regularly every week, on the same days, and at the same hours, for à whole year. On these days, according to the practice of other patients of the same kind, M. Saiffert, her physician, always came to her at the stated hours. He rubbed the hands and temples of the princess with a spirituous liquid; she was then put to bed, where she lay two hours in *a fainting fit*. During this scene, her intimate friends who came on these days formed a circle about her bed, and conversed quietly until the princess rose from her lethargy. Such was the person who exercised a supreme dominion over the mind of the queen, in the beginning of her reign. When she was absent from court she wrote to the queen, who at last showed her letters; every one laughed at the style and the spelling, and the princess lost all her

favour; however she kept her place as superintendant of the queen's household—a post renewed for her; there had not previously been a superintendant at court since Mademoiselle de Clermont.

The king, in the first year of his reign, went to Marly to be inoculated. All the princesses went upon this journey, and I accompanied Madame de Chartres on the occasion. The excursion was very brilliant, and amused me much. The Duchess of Chartres and I ran a great risk of losing our lives by an accident. One day we were sitting in the ground floor, close to each other on a sofa, over which was a large looking-glass. We were opposite a door which opened on the terrace, where the Duke of Chartres and M. de Fitzjames were amusing themselves with shooting at a mark, with pistols charged with ball, their backs being turned towards us. A ball which had struck a marble statue, was thrown back by the rebound into our room, breaking just over our heads the glass which was behind us.

I was first of all lodged at Marly in a disagreeable little room, which was only separated by a thin partition from the apartment of Madame de Valbelle, lady of the palace, so that we overheard each other's conversation in an inconvenient manner, especially as we were not acquainted. On coming into my room in the evenings after supper, I used to play or sing two good hours before going to bed. One night

between eleven and twelve, as agreeably to my habit I was playing on the harp, and decyphering a sonata, M. d'Avaray, to my great surprise, suddenly entered my room, and told me in a whisper that the queen was with Madame de Valbelle, on purpose to hear me play on the harp. I immediately began to play all I knew of instrumental and vocal pieces, and this lasted for an hour and a half without interruption, for I expected that some movement in the next room would inform me that the queen was going—but the silence was unbroken. At length being quite fatigued, I ceased playing. I was then applauded loudly, and repeatedly. M. d'Avaray then came to thank me in the name of the queen, and to say for her all sorts of obliging things. She repeated these compliments to me next day when I went to pay her my court. She was so highly pleased with my harp and my singing, that I had at this time all kinds of facilities for introducing myself into her private parties, by consenting to play at the concerts at which she herself sang. I should have been seconded by Madame de Lamballe, who strongly advised me to pursue the opportunity; but I wore already enough of chains, without adding others; such a thing as this would have required an enormous time, and would consequently have deranged all my studies which have always been the real charm and consolation of my existence. I therefore refused to allow

any steps to be taken in the matter. In a fortnight I was told that I was to lodge in one of the charming pavilions of the garden. This pavilion, like the others, contained two residences; the one very handsome on the ground floor, and the other, though inferior, on the first, very neat. It was the latter which was assigned to me; the prince of Condé occupied the other. As soon as he understood that I was about to lodge in that pavilion, he hastened to remove his furniture into the smaller apartment, in order to leave me the handsome one, which, in spite of my respectful resistance, he obliged me to accept. I was, nevertheless, by no means in his good graces; but such was at that time our politeness towards women.

I saw from time to time my aunt, who treated me extremely well, though she loved me no longer; she took it into her head to make a journey into Holland; but my eldest daughter was ill, and I could not think of accepting her proposition. I sent her a medical statement of the illness of my daughter, but she was not the less persuaded though most unjustly, that the illness of my child was only a pretext to excuse me from accompanying her; and this led on her part to the most violent resentment against me. The next year, I persuaded Madame de Chartres and the Princess de Lamballe, that we should take a journey together into Holland, which we did; and

this agreeable trip heightened my natural taste for travelling. The year following was one of the most melancholy of my life; I had the measles, of which I was so ill as to be almost dead; my mother and my children lived on the Quai des Célestins; and my children had the measles at the same time, a fact which was concealed from me with the utmost care. My son, a charming boy of five years old, died of the disease. I am here going to relate an anecdote which will make *infidels* smile with contempt; but as I had ten witnesses who have related it to persons who are still alive, I shall recount it with the most scrupulous veracity. I was entirely ignorant, as I have stated, not merely that my children had the measles, but that they were ill at all; a thing which it was very easy to conceal from me, because being seized with a contagious malady, I should never have thought of asking for them. My mother, to prevent all suspicion, tore herself from them two or three hours daily, which she passed by my bedside; I was besides watched by M. de Genlis, M. de Sauvigny, and M. de St. Martin, the surgeon of the Palais Royal. M. de Genlis every evening at nine o'clock, under pretext of going home with my mother, went to the Quai des Célestins, to pass a few hours with his children. My son died at five in the morning; on the same day, at the same hour, I was alone with my nurse, and not asleep; when

raising my eyes towards the roof of my bed, of which a large gilt rose occupied all the canopy, I saw my son distinctly under the form of an angel, who, with blue wings spread out, held out his arms to me! . . . This vision, without giving me any suspicion of the reality, occasioned me an indescribable surprise; I rubbed my eyes several times, but I saw constantly the same figure. My mother, M. de Genlis, and M. de Sauvigny, came at eleven; they were overcome with grief; but I was not at all surprised at their profound melancholy, knowing that my own state was sufficient to occasion great disquietude. As I could not help looking up every moment to the roof of the bed, with an involuntary shudder; I was asked several times what affected me, but I evaded answering; my mother, knowing my horror of spiders, thought that perhaps, I saw one; at last, as the questions were not likely to end, I replied, that I did not wish to mention what I saw, for that they would suppose me delirious, which I was not: I was pressed farther, and I told the truth. Their surprise and the shock were too much to bear; and they made a pretext for quitting the room, in order that they might weep freely. The vision lasted twelve hours; at five in the afternoon it disappeared; my loss was concealed from me five weeks, by telling me that I could not go to see my children without risking their infection with the measles. When it

was no longer possible to deceive me in this way, M. de Genlis came into my room one morning with the portrait of my son, as I had seen and described him; he was mounting towards heaven; at his feet was a coffin covered with roses, on which these words were written, *He ascends to the abode of the angels.* The idea of this miniature was taken from my account of my vision, after a portrait which M. de Genlis had of the child, which was a fine likeness. I have always worn this picture, and I have it still.* It was thus that I became acquainted with his death, which caused me so much grief, that I fell into a state of weakness which led every one to entertain fears for my life.

I thought myself that I was seized with consumption. I made a kind of will, in which I left a token of remembrance to all the persons whom I loved; I composed verses also on the state to which I was reduced, which I showed to M. de Sauvigny, who praised them highly: I do not know what became of them. I did not regret the loss of life, but as it prevented me from educating my two daughters; I was now sensible of all its illusions: the ingratitude, injustice, and the calumny of which I

* Since this was written, I have given it to my daughter; I had that touching miniature placed on a little box, which she wanted to keep relics in, which I gave her.—(*Note by the Author.*)

had been unceasingly the object, from the time of my entering the Palais Royal, had wounded my heart in a thousand ways; the death of my son, and my ill health aggravated cruelly my melancholy, but my religion supported me. After the vision which I had seen, after so signal a favour from God, I ought to have become a saint. It was not enough to believe and to feel, I ought to have devoted to God all my imagination, all my sensibility! . . . . I have attributed all the private misfortunes which have attacked me since to the levity and ingratitude which prevented me from acknowledging the miraculous favour as I ought.

M. Tronchin* ordered me the Spa waters; M. de

* "I have seen in Dr. Tronchin an instance of the love of his art, which made me tremble: it was at the death of M. de Puisieux. M. Tronchin was his physician and *intimate friend*, and was under many obligations to him. M. de Puisieux, the fifth day of his illness, was considered dying—his senses had left him; at three in the morning, M. Tronchin, who had not quitted him for twenty-four hours, told Madame de Puisieux that there was nothing more to be done, and he was going to bed. M. de Genlis remained in the patient's room. In three quarters of an hour I sent to know how he was; I was told that M. Tronchin had returned to the room, and was by the bed-side. I had now some little hope; I went into the patient's room, and was seized with horror at seeing the state in which he was. In his last moments he had a convulsive laugh; this laugh was not loud, but you heard it distinctly and continuously; and this fearful laugh, joined to the aspect of death, formed the most terrible spectacle which the

Genlis, who was obliged to join his regiment, was unable to accompany me; but he sent a gentleman, (M. Gillier,) in whom he had entire confidence, and who deserved it. M. Gillier was then from forty-five to forty-eight years of age, and had served as major in the regiment commanded by M. de Genlis in the East Indies. I have mentioned his extraordinary adventures in my *Souvenirs.* He is, perhaps, the only man who, with a good disposition, a Herculean form, and acknowledged courage, has received in the course of his life two blows from two different men, both of whom he killed. I took with me, also, a German painter, (Mr. Ott,) who had an eminent talent for copying and reducing large pictures into miniature. A few days before my departure, I went alone in a coach to ride through the Bois de Boulogne; the weather was fine, the air pure and serene, and the wood was full of hawthorn in flower. That charming harbinger of spring—the perfume, and the sight of these beautiful plants, which hasten to greet our sight, to

imagination can figure. M. Tronchin, seated by the patient, looked at him fixedly, and with the utmost attention. I called him, and asked if he had still any hope, as he remained by the bed-side of M. de Puisieux. "Oh, good God! no," said he, "but I never witnessed the sardonic laugh; and I was glad to have an opportunity of observing it." I shuddered, . . . glad to observe this terrific symptom of approaching death! and it was the friend of the dying man who spoke thus!"—(*Souvenirs de Felicie.*)

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announce the return of sunny days—the grass which just began to spring up—and the mild freshness of the balmy air—all produced in me a melting emotion, of which I shall never forget the sensation. My languid fancy revived, and raised a host of romantic fictions; and in the space of three hours which I passed in that wood, I composed in my mind the whole plan of the *Vœux Téméraires;* and on my return home, I wrote down the chief traits, and a sketch of the characters. I improved my plan in travelling, and began to write the work at Spa, from whence I brought to Paris the first eighty-four pages; afterwards other matters led me to give up this novel, which was not finished till about twenty years after in my cottage at Brevel.

I went to the waters in the month of April,* from Paris. I went first to Brussels, where I passed a month at Everberg, the country house of the Countess of Mérode, re-married to the Count de Launoy. I saw again, on this occasion, the Duchess of Ursel, and the Prince de Ligne; Prince Charles came also to dine with us twice. As he was very well acquainted with natural history, he was much more struck than we were with an incident which, nevertheless, surprised us also. The gardener brought into the dining-room, while we were at table, a large

* 1776.

living scorpion, which he had just found in the garden. Every one examined it with great curiosity. It was impossible to imagine how this dangerous insect, belonging to a hot climate, had been able to get alone into a park in Belgium. We went from hence to Mechlin; and here it was that, at an inn, the Duchess of Ursel undertook to cook all the *entremets* for our dinner; she went into the kitchen, put on a large apron, turned up her sleeves, displaying the most beautiful arms in the world, which, joined to the sparkling freshness of her complexion, rendered her the most lovely cook ever seen. She sent us all out of the kitchen, where we could not look enough at her. At dinner-time she sent us excellent creams, and the best almond-cake I ever ate. On leaving table, we went to the cathedral; I was walking first, and looking up to see the pictures, when suddenly I fell into a grave which had just been opened for an interment; I might have broken my leg, or even lost my life, but I got no other injury than a wound on the right knee. The Belgium ladies, (at that time at least,) were very superstitious, and regarded the accident as a fatal omen, which announced approaching death. This idea threw a gloom over all the party; but when they saw that I paid no attention to it, my *strength of mind* soon encouraged all the rest.

From Everberg I went to Spa, where I had hired

beforehand a little house, which we occupied entirely. I felt, on entering it, a painful and unexpected sensation. Each person went to his room, leaving me alone in mine; I saw myself surrounded by packages, in an ill-built room worse furnished; and I knew I was to pass four months here, far from my friends and all I held dear. This idea weighed upon my heart; in order to relieve myself, I thought of opening the window, and looking out into the street; the window was a sash window, and in lifting it I struck my finger on a little nail, which caused a wound from which the blood flowed in abundance; this little incident completed my distress. I have since learned to support other misfortunes, and other sorrows, but I had not then acquired a habit of suffering unlucky accidents. I sunk into a chair, with my finger still bleeding, and melted into tears; but I was so sensible of my weakness, and so ashamed of it, that I called no one. In eight or ten minutes the door opened, and a man entered, who came up to me with the expression of joy, and the most lively emotion. He was an Englishman, Mr. Conway, the son of Lord Hertford, with whom I had passed six months at Sillery, six or seven years before; his father, who had been ambassador to France, had sent him to Rheims to learn French, and M. de Puisieux had sent for him to Sillery and kept him there; he still preserved the most tender remembrance of his resi-

dence there. He was in the street when I arrived; he recognized me, and had come immediately to see me. The sight of him recalled to my mind the happiest days of my life, and my tears redoubled; he was good and tender-hearted, and wept along with me, as I detailed to him the melancholy cause of the derangement of my health. With regard to himself, he told me he was married, and that he was at Spa with his wife, for the sake of his health, for the whole season. The same evening he brought Mrs. Conway to see me; she was one of the best persons in the world. We went the day following to breakfast together at Vauxhall. Very soon I became accustomed to Spa. and ended by finding it to be what it is, a delightful place. Several persons of my acquaintance arrived at Spa. I played and rode a great deal, and took long walks on the mountains. I reserved constantly five or six hours a day to myself, which I passed in drawing flowers, playing on the harp, and composing. I received no one at my house, except three or four times when there was a concert. There were at Spa several travelling musicians, whom I assembled for some little concerts, where I played on the harp. My health was quite re-established in the course of six weeks.

M. Gillier, who undertook the charge of all my expences, was extremely useful to me in this respect, though the severity of his economy sometimes dis-

pleased me; for example, if I told him to give three or six francs to drink, he generally gave six or twelve sous. I did not know these things till afterwards, and when I testified my discontentment at them, he assured me that he would be more generous for the future—but he never kept his promise. One day he had a dispute with Saint Jean, my servant, relative to an account for postage, when Saint Jean replied with great impertinence: upon this M. Gillier said gravely, "I know what is due to *the livery* of the countess; since you wear it, you shall not have a beating as you deserve, but your insolence shall be punished in another way." So saying, he caught him in his arms, while Saint Jean struggled in vain; M. Gillier, whose strength was greatly superior to his, carried him to the gutter which ran by our street, and laid him into it at full length; a feat which inspired poor Saint Jean with such a dread and respect for M. Gillier, that he durst not even complain of his adventure, which I only learned a fortnight after.

I went with Madame de Champignelle to Dusseldorf, to see the famous gallery of pictures; we remained at Aix-la-Chapelle, where I saw for the first time the Countess of Potocka, who conceived so strong a friendship for me, that she left Aix-la-Chapelle to accompany me to Spa, where I was going, and where we passed two months together; she promised to come to Paris the winter following,

and she kept her word. I wrote to Paris to request a prolongation of my leave of absence, and to M. de Genlis, to beg that I might be allowed to take a journey into Switzerland. I obtained all I asked, and we set out.

In order to go direct to Luxembourg, we were compelled, against our intention, to sleep in a horrible little tavern, in the midst of the woods, called *the hovel*. We had been advised not to stop at this wretched place, and were assured that it was almost regarded as the haunt of cut-throats; but necessity obliged us to it. M. Gillier took but one precaution, which was to display his two pistols and his hunting-knife; armed thus, he entered first of all the horrid hovel, and M. Ott, my woman, and myself followed. We found in a large room on the ground-floor, the master of the house, with four or five servants, sitting round a table, and eating; they all had their hats on, which they never offered to pull off on our approach. I remarked that the chief of them had a broad gold lace round his hat. M. Gillier, provoked at the insolent behaviour of these persons, walked up to the table with a martial air, and knocked off with his cane the gold laced hat of the chief of the band, saying at the same time, "Don't you see the lady?" This action made me tremble, but it struck the men with so much dread, that all rose at once, and took off their hats. I took ad-

vantage of this impression to request that M. Gillier might sleep in a room close to mine; this was agreed to, and I was shown into a miserable room, separated from M. Gillier's only by a thin partition. We had scarcely lain down, when (the idea of being in a house of cut-throats keeping us thoroughly awake,) we heard a dreadful noise in M. Gillier's room, and I distinguished perfectly the voice of M. Gillier, who was crying in a suppressed voice, "Ah! villain, I have got hold of you at last, you shall not escape me now!" I also heard the sobs of M. Ott; he seemed to me to be crying for mercy, a thing which did not at all surprise me, as I knew him to be a great coward; full of alarm, I jumped out of bed, as did Mademoiselle Victoire, and we knocked loudly against the partition; immediately the noise ceased, and I heard M. Ott say distinctly, "Ah, madam, save me! M. Gillier is going to strangle me!" We then ran to the door of the bed-room, where we had to wait a few moments, M. Ott being in his shirt. Being relieved from our terror about robbers and murderers, I questioned M. Gillier about this singular scene; and M. Ott, who seemed to have come to life again at seeing me, hastened to relate how M. Gillier had seized him by the throat, threatening to strangle him, if he did not beg pardon of him for his constant mockery of him. I must state for the proper understanding of the adventure, that a few

days previous, we had found in an inn an absurd portrait of the mistress of the house: the latter, who was excessively ugly, was painted as *Flora,* holding a watch, upon which her eyes were fixed; this figure made us all laugh; when M. Ott happened to say, with a great deal of truth, that the face was precisely like that of M. Gillier. I had the misfortune to agree in this opinion, and my gaiety on the subject inspired M. Gillier, not only with great anger, but with a profound feeling of resentment, which he dissembled as well as he could, but which broke out, as has been seen, when he found himself alone at night with M. Ott. He did not intend any thing more, he said, than to give M. Ott a slight chastisement, which should learn him to be less impertinent in future, and that, if his cowardice had not made him cry out, every thing would have passed off in *a proper manner*. After this incident, M. Ott behaved very respectfully towards M. Gillier, and never ridiculed him but *traitorously*, when we were alone together.

The next day, we continued our journey, and arrived at Luxembourg, where I resided at the house of the Prince of Hesse, who had the kindness to offer me the use of it. As we travelled just as I wished, from thence we went to Strasburg, where I met the Chevalier de Coigny and M. du Coudray, a most estimable person, and a soldier of merit, who afterwards went to the United States of America, a short time before M.

de la Fayette; the latter had the good sense to cultivate his friendship, and be governed entirely by his counsels. M. du Coudray directed and seconded all his military operations, of which the entire success was owing to him. M. du Coudray, after all his exploits, was drowned in the river Delaware, which he was attempting to cross on horseback, deeply regretted by the Americans, to whom his talents had been so useful. He wanted nothing for his glory but a name more illustrious, and to belong to a powerful family, who could have published his actions in France—a care which he never troubled himself about, for his modesty was extreme. He and the Chevalier de Coigny pointed out to me all that was worth seeing at Strasburg; we ascended together the famous steeple of the Cathedral, and I had the honour of inscribing my name on the silver bell. From Strasburg I went to Colmar; in going thither we stopped at an inn to dine, where M. Gillier acted a scene of another description. They gave us an excellent fish called a *ferare*, of which the liver justly renowned is as good as that of the eel-pout, and infinitely larger. I served this fish, and I ate the whole of the liver; after this piece of gluttony, I perceived that M. Gillier was crying; I asked the cause of his emotion, and he burst into tears. I repeated my enquiries, and after many sobs, he told me that he was "deeply grieved that I should have eaten the whole of the

liver of the ferare, without having offered him a single bit." He added, that "it was not for the sake of the liver, which he cared nothing about; but that this mark of want of respect had cut him to the heart." During this explanation, M. Ott, in order not to burst out a laughing, kept blowing his nose, or holding his handkerchief to his face; the motion of his shoulders however, would have betrayed him to M. Gillier, had not all the *sensibilities* of the latter been directed to me.

On arriving at Colmar, I met my step-father the Baron d'Andlau, who received me most affectionately, gave a ball on my arrival, made me some very handsome presents, and took me to Basle, paying all my expenses, a thing quite surprising in him, and for which I was doubly grateful, knowing him to be a great miser; he made me stay four days at Basle, at the excellent inn of *The Kings*. We had four repasts a day, the longest I ever made in my life. I went through all Switzerland, writing my journal out daily. I stayed some time at Lausanne, wishing to consult M. Tissot relative to my mother's health. Persons came from all parts of Europe in the season to consult this famous physician. On arriving at Lausanne, it was impossible to find a lodging. While M. Gillier and M. Ott were looking out for one in vain, I sat lonely in my coach with my maid. A young man, the Prince of Holstein, whom I had met in the library at Basle, was at his window; and on recognizing

me, and seeing my situation, he came down to my carriage, opened the door, and handed me out, saying that he would conduct me to a lady's house who would receive me. Delighted at this, I went along with him; and at the end of the street he led me into a house; we went up stairs, and passed through several rooms, and at last arrived in a handsome saloon, where I saw a pretty young lady seated, playing on the guitar; this was Madame de Crouzas,* afterwards Madame de Montolieu, authoress of some pleasant translations and imitations of English and German novels. The prince mentioned my name, and begged Madame de Crouzas to give me an apartment in the house of her father-in-law, who was not at home. Madame de Crouzas received me with infinite grace, rose up, and conducted me immediately to her father-in-law's house, after sending for my travelling companions, and lodged me in charming

* Notwithstanding his prodigious fatness, the celebrated Gibbon was very gallant. One day being tête-a-tête with Madame de Crouzas, Gibbon wished to seize the favourable moment, and suddenly dropping on his knees, he declared his love in the most passionate terms. Madame de Crouzas replied in a tone likely to prevent a repetition of such a scene. Gibbon was thunderstruck, but still remained on his knees, though frequently desired to get up and to resume his seat. "Sir," said Madame de Crouzas, "will you have the goodness to rise?"—"Alas, madam!" replied the unhappy lover, "*I cannot!*" His size prevented him from rising without assistance; upon this Madame de Crouzás rang the bell, saying to the servant, "Lift up Mr. Gibbon!" (*Souvenirs de Félicie!*)

apartments which had a magnificent view on the Lake of Geneva. I passed twelve days at Lausanne, without ever quitting Madame de Crouzas. I was invited to fêtes, balls, and concerts; and I sung and played on the harp as much as they pleased. I enjoyed many delightful excursions on the lake, and I did not fail to visit the rocks of Meillerie. The company which I saw at the house of Madame de Crouzas was very agreeable; I saw there daily M. Tissot, who seemed flattered at seeing that I knew all his works by heart; he loved music, and I had great pleasure in playing on the harp for him. At one of these parties I met with a painful triumph. A gentleman in black, whom I had not before seen was present. I sang particularly well the air "I have lost my Eurydice," of which Gluck himself had given me the true expression; in the midst of the air the gentleman in black burst into tears, and fell fainting into the arms of the person next him; he had lost three months before a wife whom he adored. Madame de Crouzas who had heard me sing the air before, and who was not near me at the moment, made me a sign not to sing it, but unfortunately, I did not understand her meaning. I quitted Lausanne with the promise of keeping up a correspondence with Madame de Crouzas, which lasted twenty years. From Lausanne I went to Geneva, and from thence to the abode of M. de Voltaire.

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARA

I had no letters of introduction to him; but young married ladies from Paris were always sure of being well received by him. I wrote to him to request permission to visit him; there was in my note neither wit, nor affectations, nor flattery, and I dated it *Août* (August) while M. de Voltaire insisted on writing it *Auguste*. The philosopher of Ferney sent me a very gracious reply; he said that in honour of my visit he would leave off his slippers and dressing gown, and sent me an invitation to dinner and supper.

When I received M. de Voltaire's flattering reply, I was seized with a kind of terror which caused me to make the most disagreeable reflections. I recollected all that I had been told of persons who went for the first time to Ferney. It was the custom, especially for young females, to be agitated, to grow pale, and even to faint on seeing M. de Voltaire; they threw themselves into his arms, stammered in their speech, wept, and showed an emotion resembling the most impassioned love. This was the etiquette of a presentation at Ferney; M. de Voltaire was so accustomed to this kind of homage, that mere politeness, even the most obliging, appeared to him either a proof of impertinence or stupidity. I am however, naturally timid and reserved with persons whom I do not know. I never had the courage to praise any to their face with whom I was not particularly intimate; in other cases such eulogies are always to be suspected

of flattery; they must be in bad taste, and cannot fail either to displease, or to wound the object of them. I resolved however, without making a scene, to conduct myself so as not to excite any surprise; that is to say, I determined not to appear ridiculous; to go somewhat beyond my habitual simplicity, and to be less reserved, especially in speech.

I left Geneva early, in order to arrive at Ferney by my calculation, just before M. Voltaire's dinner hour; but as my watch was a great deal too fast, I got there too soon, and did not discover my error till I arrived. There is no kind of awkwardness more disagreeable than that of arriving too early for dinner at the house of persons who know how to employ their morning hours. I am sure I must have cost one or two pages to M. de Voltaire; but it consoles me to think that he was no longer engaged in writing tragedies. I only prevented him from writing a few additional blasphemies—a few more licentious verses. Earnestly wishing to look pleasing in the eyes of this celebrated man, who had done me the honour to receive me, I had taken great pains with my dress; I never wore so many feathers and flowers. I had an unlucky presentiment that my attempts in this way would be the only ones which could have any success. On the road I tried to keep alive my feeling for the illustrious old man whom I was about to visit. I repeated verses from his *Henriade* and his tragedies; but I felt that

even supposing him never to have profaned his genius by so many productions unworthy of it, and that he had never written any thing but the splendid compositions destined to immortalize him, I could only in his presence testify my admiration in silence. It would be allowable and natural to show a feeling of enthusiasm for a hero, for the liberator of a country, because without either reading or talent, all can comprehend deeds of this description, and our gratitude seems to authorise such an expression of the sentiment they inspire; but when we declare ourselves the zealous partisans of a literary man, we announce our conviction of our ability to judge correctly the merit of all his works; we engage to speak to him about them; to discuss and to expose his opinions; how much then are all these pretensions misplaced in a young person, and especially in a female!

I took along with me M. Ott, who had just returned from Italy. He had a great deal of talent and very little literature; he spoke French very badly, and had never read a line of Voltaire; but from his reputation, he had acquired for him all the *requisite* enthusiasm. He was in transports on coming in sight of Ferney, which I at once wondered at and envied; I should have been glad to catch a share of them. We passed before a church, on the front of which these words were inscribed—"*Voltaire raised this temple to God.*" This inscription made me shudder; it could

only have been inspired by the most extravagant and impious irony, or the most singular levity.

At last we arriived in the court of the château, and got out of our carrlage. We first entered a dark anti-chamber. M. Ott, on perceiving a picture, cried out, "It is a Correggio!" We went near it; but though placed in a bad light, it was in reality an original picture by Correggio, which M. Ott was exceedingly displeased at seeing hung in such a place. On entering the drawing room we found it empty. I saw evident signs throughout the château of that disagreeable confusion which announces an ill-timed visit. The servants had all an air of bustle, and on every side there were bells ringing, the noise of feet coming and going, and of doors opening and shutting. I looked at the drawing room clock, and saw with vexation that I had arrived three quarters of an hour too soon—a discovery which did not contribute to give me ease and confidence. M. Ott saw at the other end of the room a large painting in oil, of which the figures were half the size of life. A splendid frame, and the honour of being placed in the drawing room, seemed to announce something important. On drawing near, to our great surprise, we discovered a regular ale-house sign—a ridiculous picture, representing Voltaire surrounded by rays of glory like a saint, with the family of Calas at his feet, and trampling his enemies under them, Fréron,

Pompignan, &c. who were expressing their humiliation by opening their mouths wide, and making the most hideous grimaces. M. Ott was indignant at the design and colouring, and I at the whole composition. "How can any one think of placing such a thing in a drawing room?" cried I. "Yes," replied M. Ott, "and leave a picture of Correggio in a dark antichamber!" The picture was entirely the invention of a miserable Genevese painter, who had presented it to M. de Voltaire; but it appeared to me unaccountable how the latter could have had the bad taste thus pompously to expose so wretched a production. At last the door of the drawing room opened, and Madame Denis, the niece of Voltaire, made her appearance, with Madame de Saint Julien. These ladies told me that M. de Voltaire would come down stairs shortly. Madame de Saint Julien, who was very agreeable, but whom I did not at all know, was residing at Ferney for the summer; she styled M. de Voltaire *my philosopher*, and he called her *my butterfly*. She wore a gold medal at her side. I thought it was an order,. but it was a prize for shooting, given by M. de Voltaire, which she had gained a few days before. This kind of exploit is remarkable in a woman. She proposed to me to take a walk, to which I gladly consented; for I felt myself so awkward and embarrassed, and I dreaded so much the first appearance of the master of the house, that I was

glad to escape a moment in order to retard the terrible interview. Madame de Saint Julien led me out upon a terrace which would have commanded a magnificent view of the lake and the mountains, had not some one had the detestable taste of erecting on the terrace a long walk entirely shaded with trees, which shut out the view. The only glimpse you could catch of the beautiful scenery, was by little loop holes through which I could not pass my head, and the roof of the walk was so low that it caught my feathers continually. I stooped low down, and in order to make myself still shorter, I bent my knees a great deal. I was constantly treading on my gown, stumbling, breaking my feathers, and tearing my clothes; and in this most inconvenient attitude I was not in the humour for enjoying the conversation of Madame de Saint Julien, who being a little woman, and wearing a morning undress, walked about quite at her ease, talking all the time very agreeably. I asked her, laughing, whether M. de Voltaire had not been displeased at my dating my letter *Août*. She replied, "No, but that he had remarked that I did not adopt his orthography." At last we were told that M. de Voltaire was in the drawing room. I was at this moment so harassed and out of humour, that I would have given any thing to have been able to transport myself to my inn at Geneva.

Madame de Saint Julien judging of my feelings

by her own, hurried me along with her. On reaching the house I had the vexation, in passing through one of the rooms, to see myself in a looking-glass. My hair was all in disorder, and my whole appearance was discomposed and truly pitiable. I waited a moment to put myself a little in order, and then I courageously followed Madame de Saint Julien. We entered the drawing-room—and I stood in the presence of M. de Voltaire. Madame de Saint Julien advised me to salute him, saying with great good nature, "He will be very much pleased." I approached gravely, and with the expression of respect due to old age and great talents. M. de Voltaire took my hand, and kissed it. I do not know why so ordinary an action should have so much touched me, as if that kind of homage were not as common as unmeaning; but I was really flattered that M. de Voltaire should have kissed my hand, and I, in my own mind, felt perfectly inclined to embrace him, for I maintained all my usual self-possession. I presented to him M. Ott, who was so highly delighted at hearing himself named to such a distinguished character, that I thought he would have burst into tears. He immediately took from his pocket some miniatures he had painted at Berne. As ill-luck would have it, one of these paintings represented the Virgin with Jesus in her arms, at sight of which M. de Voltaire expressed some very silly and disgusting

impieties. I thought it contrary both to the duties of hospitality and to the claims of decency, to express himself in such a manner in presence of a person of my age, who had no pretension to the character of an unbeliever, and whom he saw for the first time in his life. I was much disgusted, and turned towards Madame Denis, so as not to seem to notice what fell from her uncle. He changed the subject of conversation, and spoke of Italy and the fine arts in the same strain as he wrote concerning them, that is, without taste and without knowledge. I only said a few words, expressive of my disagreement with his opinions on the subject. Literary topics were not mentioned at all, either before or after dinner; for he thought, I believe, that such subjects could not be very interesting to a lady who came forward in conversation in such an unpresuming manner. However he kept up the conversation with politeness, and sometimes even with gallantry towards me.

During the whole time of dinner, M. de Voltaire was very far from being agreeable. He seemed always in a passion with his servants, incessantly crying out to them, and that too, with such strength of lungs that I often started involuntarily. As the dining-room repeated sounds very strongly, his tremendous voice reverberated in the most alarming manner. I had been told beforehand of this singular foible, which it is so unusual for any one to display before strangers;

and, in fact, it was evident enough that it was the mere result of habit, for his servants were not surprised at it or minded it in the least. After dinner, learning that I was fond of music, he desired Madame Denis to play on the harpsichord. Her old-fashioned style transported me, in fancy, to the times of Louis XIV., but it did not recall the most pleasing features of that great age. She was finishing a composition of Rameau's, when a pretty little girl, about seven or eight years of age, entered the room, ran up to him, and clasping her arms round his neck, called him *papa*. He received her caresses with great good nature, and seeing that I was delighted at this agreeable sight, he told me that the child belonged to a grand-daughter of the great Corneille, to whom he had given a marriage portion. How affected I should have been at that moment had I not recollected his *Commentaries*, in which his injustice and envy are so awkwardly and openly displayed. Here we were continually shocked by the appearance of contrasts of the most repulsive kind; so that admiration was either arrested in its flight or altogether destroyed by disagreeable recollections, sometimes even by disgusting improprieties.

M. de Voltaire received several visitors from Geneva, and then proposed to take me out in his carriage. Horses were put, and he, with his niece, myself, and Madame de Saint Julien, entered the *berline*, and set out. He

took us to see the houses he had built, and the benevolent establishments he had founded in the village. He was greater there than in his works, for every where was seen a well-directed benevolence: and we could scarcely be persuaded that the same hand which had written such impious, false, and wicked things, should have performed such kind, wise, and noble actions. He showed the village to every stranger that came to visit him, but he did it unaffectedly; spoke with the utmost simplicity and good feeling on the subject, told us what he had done, and yet had not the least appearance of boasting of his conduct; and I know but few persons who could say as much. On our return to the house the conversation was very lively, and we spoke with great interest of every thing we had seen. I did not set out before night; M. de Voltaire invited me to stop till next day after dinner, but I was desirous of returning to Geneva.

All the busts and portraits of him that I have seen are extremely like him; but no artist has fully expressed the eyes. I expected to find them keen and full of fire, and they were certainly the liveliest I ever saw; but they also had something indescribably soft and tender in their expression—the whole soul of *Zaire* was expressed in them. His laugh and bitter smile greatly altered the expression of his face. He was much broken down, and his old-fashioned style of dress made him look still older. He had a sepul-

chral tone of voice that made him look very strange, particularly as he had a custom of talking excessively loud, though he was not deaf. When neither religion nor his enemies were talked of, his conversation was simple and pleasing, without a particle of affectation, and consequently, with such wit and talent as he possessed, perfectly delightful. It seemed to me that he could not bear that any one should have a different opinion from his own; and when opposed in the least degree, his manner became warm and bitter. He had certainly lost much of the politeness and habits of society he had formerly been accustomed to; and it was quite natural that this should be the case. Since he had been residing here, people came to see him only to flatter and praise him to the skies; his opinions were held oracular, all that surrounded him were his most humble worshippers; he heard of nothing but the enthusiasm he inspired, and the most ridiculous exaggerations seemed in his eyes only common offerings of homage and respect. Kings have never been the object of such extravagant adulation, for etiquette forbids certain flatteries to be lavished on them; conversation is not carried on with them; their presence awes and silences; and, thanks to this feeling, flattery is forced at court to retain some marks of modesty, and not to show itself unless under the most delicate forms. Open and unrestrained flattery I never saw but at Ferney, and there it was altogether gro-

tesque; but when it can please, from the influence of habit, in such a shape, it must necessarily spoil the taste, conversation, and manners of the individual exposed to its fascinations. Hence were the personal feelings of M. de Voltaire so extremely irritable, and hence did critical attacks cause him a childish chagrin he never could conceal. At that moment he had just felt a very keen disappointment. The Emperor was about to travel very close to Ferney, and as M. de Voltaire expected a visit from the illustrious traveller, he had prepared fêtes, and written verses in honour of the event, which unluckily every body knew. But the Emperor travelled on without stopping, or even sending him a single message. Some one asked him as he was approaching Ferney, if he would see M. de Voltaire, when he drily replied—"No! I know him too well already." This cutting and profound saying proves that he had read his works like a man of talent and an enlightened monarch.

After an instructive and delightful journey, I returned to France by way of Fort l'Ecluse and Lyons, and arrived at the Palais Royal in the beginning of autumn, after a five months' absence. A few days after my return, M. de Genlis told me that as the government of the island of St. Domingo was vacant, he was desirous of obtaining it, which, he said, would be perfectly easy, as the Minister of Marine, M. de Boines, was very favourably disposed towards him,

and the only thing to be done was to get Madame de Lamballe to ask the place from the Queen. I told M. de Genlis that I would not consent to solicit such a distant post for him unless I went along with him; he opposed my resolution, but it was all in vain, for I never retracted a resolution in my life which required a painful sacrifice to form. It was agreed that I was to go to St. Domingo; Madame de Lamballe spoke to the Queen, and obtained the wished-for promise. The whole business seemed so certain, that we ordered the plate and household things suitable to a public situation of that kind; but, all at once, the whole matter failed, for M. de Boines was dismissed from his office, and M. de Sartine, a man personally hostile to my husband, was put in his place. To tell the truth, I was not then sorry for the result; but I have often since regretted that I did not go: as such a journey would have afforded me much information, done so much credit to my courage, and which, in the sequel, would have spared me so many harassing cares, and painful difficulties.

On my return from Switzerland, I found Madame de Potocka, who had intended to stay only two or three months in France, but who, on my account, remained a much longer period. Not to lose her society, I had made arrangements so as not to be of the court party this year at Fontainebleau. I went along with her, my mother and my children, M. de

Genlis, the Comte de Brostocki, (a young Pole related to Madame de Potocka,) and M. de Sauvigny, to spend all the time, which was six weeks, at Versailles, where we had the *Appartemens du Palais Royal,* as the apartments of the Duke of Orleans, of the Duke and Duchess of Chartres and their ladies of honour, in the interior of the castle, were designated. I was allowed the use of them all during the journey to Fontainebleau, and we saw every thing in the interior of the castle, even the small private apartments of the princes of the royal family. We passed our time delightfully, and M. de Genlis made an immense number of drawings with his pen, with a variety of pretty songs. M. de Sauvigny read us some scenes of a tragedy he was then writing; and I began to give regular lessons to my eldest daughter Caroline, who was ten years of age, and whose understanding was altogether astonishing for her years. Her beauty was so remarkable, and her pleasing ways so fascinating that it is an actual fact, that the Count de Brostocki, who was twenty-four years of age, really fell in love with her, and six months afterwards, asked her in marriage. In the sequel, we shall see how much he persevered in his offer. I did not return to Paris till the court party had come back from Fontainebleau, in the beginning of November. Madame de Potocka caused me to be much from home the whole winter, as she was desirous of seeing all the remarkable

curiosities in Paris, the public buildings and establishments, the great manufactories, and even the private collections of curiosities, pictures, and natural history. We began a course of natural philosophy with M. Sigault de la Fond; and immediately afterwards, a course of chemistry applied to the arts, with M. Mittouart, (assistant professor of chemistry and first apothecary to Louis XVI.) The latter course was attended by a select party of twenty-five persons of our acquaintance, among whom were Mesdames d'Harville, de Jumilhac, de Chastenet, de Melette, d'Arcamballe, de Meulan; the Chevalier de Cossé, the Vicomte de Gand, the Chevalier de Chastellux, M. Guibert, the Count de Custines, M. de Genlis, and some others. I believe I have already mentioned that two or three years before this, I had prevailed on the Duchess of Chartres, to give us the *recreation*, three times a week after dinner, of a course of natural history; but it was a *recreation* for nobody but myself, as I alone profited by it, because, the worthy M. de Bomare came occasionally to give me private lessons in my own room. He presented me with a synopsis of the different subjects in his dictionary, carefully arranged, and I read it with great attention. These different courses did not make me learned, but they gave me general notions on scientific subjects, which afterwards made the books I read much more agreeable to me, rendered my travels more instruc-

tive, and were, at the same time, of great utility in my purely literary studies.

During my stay at Spa, and after my return, I had written several little comedies for my daughters; the three first were *Agar dans le Désert, Les Flacons,* and *La Colombe.* I had them performed on a small private theatre, which I borrowed for the occasion. To this little play I invited about sixty persons. The success of the two plays was astonishing, for my second daughter Pulcherie, had a most wonderful talent for this kind of acting. Though scarcely eight years old, she moved the audience to tears in playing the character of *Agar,* and in comedy showed equal talent. Mademoiselle Sainval the elder, of the *Theatre Francais,* gave her lessons in tragic acting. I took upon me to teach her comedy, and she performed equally well in both. She was not distinguished for the dazzling beauty or regular features of her sister; but her face was charming, full of expression, and the sound of her voice went straight to the heart. The daughter of Madame de Jumilhac performed the character of *Ismäel,* and my eldest daughter that of the *angel,* which she so greatly resembled, that, when she first appeared there was a general burst of applause and admiration in the theatre, which did not subside for several minutes. This success encouraged me to further efforts; and I immediately set about writing, night and day, two other longer plays. *Les*

Dangers du Monde, and *La Curieuse*. So many persons requested to be admitted to see the performance, that I found it necessary to look out for a larger theatre. We found one, at length, much larger than I wanted, for it held five hundred persons. It belonged to a private company of citizens, who lent it with great good-will; and I sent them one hundred tickets for themselves, but the rest of the audience consisted of all my own acquaintance, and many persons besides, with whom I had no intimacy whatever. Pulcherie in the *Curieuse*, advanced even the high reputation she had formerly obtained; and my eldest daughter, in the *Dangers du Monde*, played the character of the viscountess with indescribable effect; her sister was equally successful in the character of the marchioness. The spectators called loudly for the *author*, who did not appear, and for a second performance, which was granted on the condition that it should not be before two weeks. In the interval, I was asked for an infinitely greater number of tickets than I could supply, and among the unsuccessful applicants was a very amiable young man, the Marquis de Saint Blancard, whom I scarcely knew at that time. He came unknown to me, however, dressed like one of the servants of the theatre. I could not refuse three tickets to M. de Schomberg, and six more to the Viscount de la Tour du Pin, for three celebrated literary characters, with

whom I had hitherto no acquaintance, Messieurs de la Harpe, Marmontel, and D'Alembert.* The success of this performance made so much noise, that the Chevalier de Chastellux (who was very fond of me, at that time) was quite alarmed for my future happiness. After the play, when the curtain had fallen, he ran up to me on the stage with tears in his eyes, and embracing me with the liveliest emotions, and exclaimed :—" This day is a glorious one for you, but it foretells storms that make me tremble for your peace." He was right, though I did not feel any of his alarms, because my vanity, both as a mother and as an author, blinded me as to the future. In fifteen days, I wrote *Zemire et Azor*, or *La Belle et la Bête*, which was performed during the winter, along with the *Enfant Gaté*. These plays were all equally successful with the first, and made the same noise, yet not one of the ladies of honour of the Palais Royal asked me for a ticket. What is more remarkable, neither Madame de Montesson nor the Duke of Orleans desired to see a single performance. Yet I had no quarrel with my aunt whatever, and was even so good-natured as to play *proverbs* pretty often at her

* The latter next day wrote me a very complimentary letter concerning these plays; I admired the strength of his memory, which was displayed in the recollection of whole scenes with perfect correctness, and even of the very words of the play.—(*Note by the Author.*)

house; but the fact was, her envy in this point was so great, that she could not bear to think of seeing me so highly applauded. The Chevalier de Chastellux wrote some fine verses on these performances, and some very beautiful ones were likewise written by M. de La Harpe, which are to be found in his *Correspondence* with the Grand Duke of Russia.* I received letters from M. D'Alem-

* Of the various poetical pieces written on this occasion, all equally flattering, which M. de La Harpe mentioned in his correspondence, I shall only quote the following letter:

"Madame de Genlis has had these little plays performed by her own children, who are only ten or twelve years of age, but endowed with such precocious talents and wonderful intelligence, that they give new charms even to the compositions of their mother. She lately gave a representation of three of these plays, on a private theatre, to which the best company in Paris were invited, and which afforded the whole of the spectators, without a single exception, the most inexpressible delight. I was so happy as to be amongst the number; and the next day sent the following verses to the amiable author, with whom I was not acquainted, but who had made me enjoy one of the most delightful emotions I ever experienced in the course of my life."

Non, ce que j'ai senti ne peut être un prestige;
Non, j'ai su trop bien en jouir,
Et si l'on doute d'un prodige,
Comment douter de son plaisir?
Les drames ingénus, composés pour l'enfance,
Où l'art, soumis à l'innocence
Se défend les ressorts qu'ailleurs il fait mouvoir,
Avec tant de réserve ont-ils tant de pouvoir?

bert, and from M. de Marmontel. Besides these plays, I wrote *le Bailli*, a comic drama, in which

Ton art, belle Genlis, l'emportant sur le nôtre,
Ne fait parler qu'un sexe, et charme l'un et l'autre.
Que tes tableaux sont vrais dans leur simplicité !
Tu peins pour des enfans, mais la maturitê
　　Et se reconnoît et t'admire ;
　　Le miroir ou tu les fais lire
Sur nous de tes leçons réfléchit la clarté.
　　Jamais, jamais la vérité
N'exerça sur les cœurs un plus amiable empire.
Mais je parle à l'auteur de ses succès brillans,
Quand je puis applaudir au bonheur d'une mère !
　　Je suis bien sûre de te plaire,
　　En te parlant de tes enfans.
Vous, la gloire et t'amour d'une mère attendrie !
　　O Caroline, Pulchérie,
Des mains de la nature ô chefs-d'œuvre naissans !
Elle a sur votre aurore épuisé ses présens.
Vous semblez ignorer parmi tant de suffrages,
　　Et nos plaisirs et vos talens ;
A celle dont les soins forment vos jeunes ans
　　Vous reportez tous nos hommages,
Vous oubliez enfin dans vos jeux innocens
Qu'il n'est donné qu'à vous d'embellir ses ouvrages.
Quel ensemble enchanteur ! quel spectacle charmant !
Mon cœur est encor plein du plus pur sentiment,
Mon œil encor frappé de la plus douce image,
De ce transport flatteur, de ce ravissement,
　　Que faisoient naître à tout moment
Les grâces de son style et celles de votre âge.
Je pensois à sa joie, à ses félicités,
　　Aux mouvemens de sa tendresse ;

Pulcherie, who performed *M. Bailli,* was delicious. This play, which kept the audience in a roar of laughter, is not to be found in my *Theatre d'Education.* I lost it in a very strange way. I had no copy of it, and gave the manuscript to the prompter, who, in being called on some business upon the stage after the performance, left it behind him; when he returned it was not to be found; every enquiry was made in vain, and it was lost without our being able to form even a guess at the person who had stolen it. During the same winter, I wrote *the Ile Heureuse,* but it was only performed before a small select party. Madame de Potocka and I played the characters of fairies, and in the after piece, which was the *Flacons,* we both performed again, Madame de Potocka the fairy, and I the mother. These performances were continued till summer came round, so that they lasted without intermission for eight months. I had no idea of printing these plays, though I had already been for more than two years an author in print, but anonymously. When M. de

Je songeois que ces cris de la publique ivresse,
Dans son cœur maternel étoient tous répétés.
Digne mère, jouis, jouis de ces délices.
Ton me âme et tes talens, voilà tes justes droits.
Dans toi seule aujourd'hui l'on adore à la fois
L'auteur, l'ouvrage et les actrices.
(*Note by the Author.*)

Sauvigny was writing a work, entitled, *Le Parnasse des Dames,* he pressed me so much, to give him leave to insert three comedies I had written, that I yielded to his entreaties, on condition that the matter should be kept perfectly secret. He inserted them under the title of *Plays by a young Lady.* There was *Les Fausses Delicatesses,* which I mentioned already; *La Mere Rivale,* and the *Amant Anonyme,* which I wrote at Villers-Coterets in a fortnight.*

* The Chevalier de Chastellux wrote the following stanzas on the author, the actors, and the plays of this little theatre; they were addressed to Madame de Genlis.

Lise, à vos spectacles charmans
Qui peut refuser son suffrage ?
Drame, acteurs, tout est votre ouvrage,
Et l'on n'y voit que vos enfans.

De vous-même heureuse rivale,
Et féconde dans le printemps,
Vous voulez que l'enfance égale
Et vos appas et vos talens.

Partout, en voyant ces prodiges,
Dont nos Garricks seroient jaloux,
On sent que leurs plus doux prestiges
Sout encore émanés de vous.

Ainsi dans vos jeux le plus sage
Sans le savoir peut s'engager,
Et, n'adorant que votre image,
Il croit vous aimer sans danger.

I had spent a very brilliant winter; my success had put me greatly in fashion, I received innumerable invitations to suppers, all of which I refused, as well as all new connections, but I made Madame de Potocka acquainted with a great many agreeable persons, and she was very highly distinguished in society for her beauty, wit, and gracefulness. She came to almost all the grand suppers at the Palais Royal, saw all the inmates of the court one after another, and judged of them with the same talent of observation as a lively Frenchwoman would have done. Among the young ladies, those she thought most striking were the Princess d'Henin, the Viscountess de Laval, of a mild, and at the same time, keen look, and of a conversation similar to her countenance; the Princess de Poix, whom I have already mentioned; the Duchess of Polignac, the queen's favourite, whose face was enchanting since the

Eh! qui peut voir dans la prairie
L'onde errer sur de verts gazons,
Sans chercher la nymphe chérie
Qui les enrichit de ses dons.

Ah! suivons plutôt dans leur course,
Suivons ces amiables ruisseaux;
Qui voit en paix couleur leurs eaux
Pourroit s'enivrer à leur source.

These plays were performed in the winter of 1777 and 1778.—(*Note by the Editor.*)

fashion came in of letting the hair fall down over the forehead, the only defective part in her countenance. The favour she enjoyed, never changed any of her natural sweetness and simplicity. She was said to have little sense, but I think she must have had a great deal to have preserved her former unaffectedness in such an elevated situation, and to have been able to maintain herself in the highest favour without being intoxicated with her power, and without making a single enemy. I have often conversed with her, and always found her highly agreeable. Her cousin and friend, Madame de Châlons, the sister of M. d'Andlau, my father-in-law's nephew,) was very handsome, amiable, and witty. Her sister in-law, Madame d'Andlau, the daughter of M. Helvetius, would have been very beautiful, if she had not had a defect in one eye, with which she could not see; she was amiable, good, graceful, and governed by principles altogether different from those her father displayed in his writings. She had the merit of giving a most excellent education to her two daughters, who were very interesting and lovely. Madame de Sabran, now Madame de Boufflers, was one of the most enchanting creatures I ever knew, by her appearance, elegance, wit, and accomplishments. She danced exquisitely, painted beautifully, wrote pretty verses, and was endowed with unbounded sweetness and good-nature. Madame de

MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARA

Potocka was often invited on my account to the *petits soupers* of the Palais Royal, for the princes had such kindness for the ladies of honour as to admit into their company their nearest relations and most intimate friends. The persons not belonging to the Palais Royal, who came most frequently to these parties, were Mesdames de Beauvau, de Boufflers, de Luxembourg, de Segur, (the mother and daughter-in-law,) the Baron de Talleyrand, the Marchioness de Fleury, all intimate friends of the Duchess of Chartres. The Baron de Talleyrand had a fine person, and was not deficient in talent; but he was heavy in conversation, and not very agreeable. His wife had a pleasing shape, and something old-fashioned in her look; her language and manners were not dignified, her conversation was composed of gossip and insipidity; but her conduct was irreproachable, she was an affectionate wife and a tender mother. The Marchioness de Fleury had a fine face and beautiful eyes, though she was short sighted at the time, and afterwards became completely blind. She was good, lively, and unaffected. I was very intimate with her, till her death. While speaking of her I wish to refute in this place a very absurd calumny. In some *Souvenir*, or other, (for innumerable ones came out after mine,) it is asserted that the Duke of Chartres had a book containing a list of all the young ladies belonging to the household

of the Palais Royal, with the various qualities in opposite columns, at the head of which were the words, *the pretty, the agreeable,* and the *abominable* ladies; and *that the name of Madame de Fleury was inserted in th: last column, which she was informed of, and never pardoned.* There is not an iota of truth in the whole story. Madame de Fleury was very handsome, and the Duke of Chartres was so fond of her, that he called her his sister, while she called him brother; she was always intimate with him, and preserved the warmest friendship for him to the last. She was too much praised for her simplicity and unaffectedness; and she began to consider as real accomplishments, those feelings that really render aocomplishments pleasing, and she lost all their charms by adopting the wildest singularities. Without mentioning her name, I have given a portrait of her in the *Souvenirs de Felicie*, but I did not mention the following anecdote, which gives an accurate notion of her general behaviour in company. She went one evening to sup with the Princess de Guimenée, and, as usual, there was a large party; as she came to pay her respects, she was dressed in grand costume. Instead of taking off her long train in the anti-chamber, she did not take it off till she reached the drawing-room, and Madame de Guimenée said with a laugh, that she might as well take off her hoop-petticoat also. *With a great deal of*

pleasure, said Madame de Fleury: at this unexpected saying several ladies ran towards her to urge her to this frolic—her hoop-petticoat and fine silk under petticoat were taken off, and in a moment she stood before the company completely undressed, displaying her big person, her little tippet, and her little short dimity petticoat, round which her two pockets were dangling. This was done before more than fifty persons, and I was one of the number. She remained in this strange costume the whole of the evening, from half-past nine o'oclock till two in the morning, without showing the smallest embarrassment, any more than if she had done the commonest thing in the world.

Madame de Rochambeau, daughter-in-law of the general who afterwards became a Marshal, was like Madame de Dampierre, remarkable for the frankness of her disposition, conversation, and manners, of which I never knew any other instance in high society, than in those two individuals. The perfect purity of their habits gave great value to this singularity. The Chevalier de Chastellux, who was also one of my dearest friends at this time, had a noble and generous disposition; but though his talents were above the common run, they did not rise into a very superior rank. His company was pleasing and trustworthy, for with great knowledge he had not a tinge of pedantry; and, in fact, his conversation would

have been singularly pleasing, had he not had the foible of filling it with puns. He wrote some good plays for private acting; but his book of *Felicité Publique* is not a good work, though it ought to raise our esteem for the courtier and man of the world, who was capable of writing it. He is the first author, I believe, who has shown strong indignation and contempt at the ancient Spartan manners, which have been so greatly admired, and which, in fact, were so excessively barbarous, as the Chevalier de Chastellux clearly perceived and strongly expressed in his work. The Vicomte de Segur came also, but not often, to these little parties. He was handsome, but affected a kind of indolence and *non-chalance* that made his carriage and way of talking ridiculous in my eyes. I never saw in society a single instance of foppery so perfectly undisguised, and consequently so utterly tasteless and unfashionable. His wit was nothing but noise, his reputation for agreeable accomplishments, nothing but a fashion; his brother possessed infinitely more merit and talent. I never had any opportunity of becoming acquainted with his disposition, but I have heard facts mentioned that do great honour to the goodness of his heart. M. de Dampierre, husband of the lady I have mentioned above, had a frankness and sincerity that gained every heart. The Marquis de Rouffignac was the most completely chivalrous man ever seen during my

times in society; brave, sincere, capable of the most heroic friendship, he was esteemed by all who knew him. He had no other fault than that of being too susceptible, and of fighting duels for the merest trifles, which presented a singular contrast to the extreme mildness of his manners. I shall here take an opportunity of relating several anecdotes of him that will suffice to give a very good idea of his character. The Chevalier de Boufflers, so celebrated for his wit, at first displayed nothing but liveliness and wit in some beautiful verses, but had a sound judgment and pleasing demeanour; and though he long laughed at *sensibility*, and sung the praises of inconstancy, he proved that he possessed deep and ardent feeling, and that merit combined with grace could fix his heart. In his early youth, he has run through and mastered every branch of lively wit and poignant satire, and reserved judgment for his mature age, which is in fact, giving it all the authority it can obtain. As I have already mentioned M. de Vaudreuil and some others, I shall renew the thread of my narrative.

At this period I had an accidental meeting with a person which gave me great delight. I was walking one morning in the Palais Royal, when I perceived a lady of six or seven-and-thirty, walking with a very young lady, who looked at me with striking interest and attention. I looked at her earnestly also, the

features did not seem unknown; I instantly startled and exclaimed, "'Tis Mademoiselle de Mars!" She came up to me, took my hand, which she pressed tenderly, and said to me in a faltering voice, "Let us restrain ourselves in this place—at what hour could I see you to-morrow?"—"Any time in the morning," I replied. She hastily left me on hearing these words, and I was so confused with this unexpected meeting with a dear friend, that I hurried home immediately. During the whole day I thought of nothing but her, could not close my eyes during the night, and rose very early next morning. She did not come till ten o'clock; but the moment I heard her, I ran forward to meet her, and embraced her with the deepest emotion, without being able to utter a single word. This excellent young lady was equally affected; we breakfasted together, and chatted till one o'clock. We talked of scarcely any thing else but the château of Saint-Aubin, and the happy times of my childhood. Of herself she merely told me, that she had lately taken upon herself to act as governess of the children of Madame de Voyer; but that as that lady's temper did not suit her very well, she did not expect to remain in that situation long. In fact, her eminent accomplishments in a very short time placed her in the family of the Princess Louise de Condé. The secretary of M. de Voyer who had secured himself a comfortable independency, had the good sense to appreciate the merits

Mademoiselle de Mars, married her, and soon after took her into one of the provinces. But I saw her almost daily, during the time she remained with Madame de Voyer. She came several times to our private plays, and remembered with delight the period at which she had seen me perform *Iphigénie* and *Zaire*, when I was about the age of my daughters, and even at an earlier age.

Amidst the many cares of every kind by which I was continually harassed, there was one that gave me more trouble than all the rest; I mean my concern for my brother's success in life, as my aunt (who knew him only so far as having seen him occasionally on New Year's Day) made not the slightest effort for his advantage. He was fifteen months younger than me, with a handsome person, mild, modest, and unassuming manners. He had a natural talent for geometry, which he very successfully applied to mechanics, and in other respects was exceedingly clever. He had a pleasing turn for poetry, much taste for the fine arts, particularly for music, the composition of which he knew profoundly, and in which he wrote some delightful songs. His disposition was so extremely mild, that it afterwards degenerated into tameness and weakness; but no one could be more good-natured, have nobler sentiments, or a more excellent heart. We were very fond of each other from our earliest infancy, without a single instance of

coolness having taken place between us, or even a single word of difference. I was continually meditating how I should enable him to make a fortunate marriage, and had already failed three times in the attempt, when, at length, I was advised to attempt to unite him with Mademoiselle de Raffetau, a young lady of high birth, and I fully succeeded, thanks to the influence I was supposed to enjoy at the Palais Royal, and the powerful protection naturally expected from such a near relation as Madame de Montesson. Yet, in spite of all my endeavours, she did nothing whatever to advance the marriage, which would have failed after all, had I not taken upon myself to lodge and maintain the new married couple. For this purpose it was necessary to have the consent of M. de Genlis, and it was a great sacrifice on his part, for I could lodge them no where else but in his apartments, which were immediately adjoining my own. With the most perfect kindness he gave up to them his own private apartments, finely furnished, and in the most excellent order, and hired one for himself in a house that looked into the garden of the Palais Royal, but without the Palace. Mademoiselle de Raffetau had lost her mother at twelve years of age; she was now eighteen, and had been at the convent of Panthemont with a very ignorant governess, who succeeded, notwithstanding, in giving her a most finished education as far as regarded pious and charitable duties, and all

the more amiable qualities of the mind. I shall mention only one instance of the moral lessons she gave, to show the correctness of her views in education. The late Madame de Raffetau had maintained a poor paralytic old woman, whom the daughter took care of at her mother's death; and the governess made her be brought once a week to the convent in a chair. She was received in the outer parlour, whither the governess and her pupil hastened on her arrival; and as the poor woman could not make use of her hands, Mademoiselle de Raffetau combed her hair, washed her feet, and pared her nails; but when the governess was not pleased with her pupil, she deprived her of the happiness of exercising these pious duties of charity, and fulfilled them herself; this was the only penance to which her pupil was ever subjected, but it was one that threw her into the deepest affliction. This fact, (which I have mentioned in the *Veillées du Château,)* is alone sufficient to show the high character of both governess and pupil. This excellent and sublime idea was very far superior to the notion of depriving a young lady of the pleasure of wearing a handsome dress. Yet this excellent governess had never been any thing more than a waiting maid to Madame de Raffetau; it would certainly be difficult to find a woman with such sentiments amongst the common people of the present day; but at that period there was much re-

ligious feeling amongst the lower classes. Mademoiselle de Raffetau was little, but charming; her face was regular and extremely pleasing. I never saw any one else with such beautiful hands and pretty little feet, except Madame de Louvois; her skill in doing every thing was absolutely like magic; in embroidery no one could equal her; and as her governess had given her a music-master, and her own voice was admirably fine, she sung like an angel. Madame de Montesson gave her nothing but a watch, of the value of ten louis, as a marriage present; for my own part, I gave her the marriage *corbeille,* and added to it a number of my finest jewels. Madame de Montesson gave the marriage dinner, to which I conducted the young married lady, who was greatly admired for her pretty person and agreeable manners. I afterwards took her to pay all her marriage visits, presented her at court, and to all the princes, and, in a word, did all the duties of a mother towards her, and that, too, with the utmost pleasure, for I conceived the strongest affection for her, on account of her unaffected talents, and charming sweetness and gaiety of temper. She was never idle for a moment. I gave her lessons in grammar, in which she made astonishing progress in a very short time; and she likewise paid great attention to her writing, which soon became excellent. Her object in attending to the latter, was to enable

herself to copy the memoirs in various subjects, that my brother was continually writing; and she succeeded so well, that she became his best copyist, and even transcribed, without the slightest error, long articles on the sciences, full of all kinds of geometrical figures. She resided with me only ten months, for she was so greatly admired, and so much interested every one that knew her, that Madame de Montesson saw the surprise that people generally entertained at her conduct in not giving them a home, and at last determined to take her and my brother into her own house.

It was Monsigny who persuaded her to take this lofty step. That excellent man, who constantly felt the warmest interest in every thing relating to me, was distinguished for talent and skilful management, as well as for good-natured simplicity. He was perfectly well acquainted with the temper and selfish disposition of Madame de Montesson; and told her, with great apparent simplicity, all the facts that he could collect, respecting the strong affection of my sister-in-law for me, and the great honour we obtained in public opinion by our mutual attachment. The result of all these reports was, that she first of all took them to St. Assise, and then kept them with her ever afterwards. It was with great regret on both sides that we parted, after having lived together for ten months. I still maintained the closest inti-

macy with my sister-in-law, which was continued without interruption, till her death. When she left me, M. de Genlis did not return to his old apartment, as he gave it up to my mother and my children, that I might have an opportunity of giving regular lessons to my daughters.

Madame de Potocka spent two years in Paris. We recommenced our private theatre the winter after, and it was towards the middle of this winter that I formed the idea of establishing an order, which I called the *Order of Perseverance.* The only persons in the secret were, Madame de Potocka, and M. de Brostocki, who maintained every where that this order had formerly existed in Poland. Every one believed this to be really the fact, for the following reason. The King of Poland had some time before sent me his portrait and a letter, in which he asked for mine in return, and returned me thanks for *all the kindness* I had shown to his countrymen; for, in fact, all the Polish ladies who arrived in Paris, came first of all to see me. I took upon me to present them at the Palais Royal, and to show them all the little attentions commonly shown to strangers. I sent my portrait to the King of Poland, and confidentially communicated to him my plan of the order of *Perseverance.* He was so good as to write me a charming letter, written on purpose to be shown, in which he thanked me for *reviving an order founded in*

Poland in the days of yore. This was written by his own hand, and signed. I showed it to every one, and nobody had the least suspicion of the story we had fabricated. I maintained that I held the rules of the order from Madame de Potocka and M. de Brostocki, and that I had done nothing but put them in order. In forming my establishment, I took a part of the prettiest costumes of ancient chivalry, and added innumerable romantic trifles of my own, with some customs peculiar to the academies of the learned. Members were only received by ballot, and were subjected to a trial, which was always one of wit and intellect, for they had to guess at the enigmas I composed, and answer the moral questions put by the president. They afterwards read or pronounced a discourse in praise of some virtuous quality, which they selected at their own discretion. The president replied in a short moral exhortation, and made them take the oath, which was religious, patriotic, and chivalrous at the same time. I had not forgotten to make them swear to defend, on all occasions, weakness and innocence overpowered by oppression, and, likewise, to make known to the world the noble actions they might discover. For the latter quality I even founded a prize. Every knight and every lady who should bring before the society, the discovery of three noble actions, well authenticated and judged deserving by the majority

of votes, were to receive a gold medal of the value of a hundred and twenty livres; but it was necessary that none of these actions should have been performed by a relation or friend of the person who brought them forward, nor by a member of the society. The medal represented on one side a crown of laurel and ever-greens, with the word *Perseverance;* and these words on the other side—*Reward of Virtue.* There were four medals given in all; I had one, and sometime afterwards, when our numbers amounted to fifty, I was voted another, as a recompense for the services I had rendered to the order. Every knight and every lady were obliged to assume a device; every knight chose a brother in arms, and every lady a female friend. To prevent every invidious feeling among my own friends, my mother allowed me to choose her for mine. It was optional with the ladies to choose a knight, or otherwise; but when one was chosen, it was always done so as to avoid malicious allusions. My brother and M. d'Osmont (nephew of M. d'Osmont of the Palais Royal) were the first knights whom we admitted; and my brother chose M. d'Osmont for his brother in arms. Our third knight was the Duke de Lauzun; and the first ladies were, my mother, Mesdames D'Harville and Jumilhac, and my two sisters-in-law. Our first president was the Marquis de Seignelai. When we had been established a fortnight, M. de Lauzun gave us, at a house he pos-

sessed beyond the Barriers, in the centre of a garden, a tent he had got made expressly for our meetings, which were held once a fortnight. The tent was very large and magnificent, and was richly ornamented within. Every one of the members of the order was obliged to bring a picture of a certain regulated size, well painted and framed, representing his device, and this was placed in the interior of the tent, which we called the *Temple of Honour*. We had our colours, which were white and grey; and the ladies and gentlemen wore a light grey scarf, richly embroidered with silver. Every knight received, on his admission, a gold ring, with the initial letters of the device of the order enamelled. The device was as follows:

Candeur et loyauté, courage et bienfaisance,
Vertu, bonté, persévérance.

The order was much talked of,* and we were so

* I was walking one morning at the Palais Royal, when I met M. de Rulhiére. I had given him a letter to send to America some time before, and he now told me that he had given it to the Count de Palouski, who was about to depart, and who, besides, had claims to be preferred by me to every other. "Why? Are you not a lady of the order of *Perseverance?*"—"Yes, but what of that?"—"Why, because the Count de Palouski is a son of the *founder* of your order." At these words, I smiled and said—"That cannot be, for our order is as old as the crusades."—"Good God! whom do you tell this to? I know very well that it is as old—for though not a knight of the order, I ought to know

much pressed to admit new members, that our numbers soon increased to a large extent. This eager-

something about the matter, for I have been many years in Poland, and have written the history of the late revolutions, hence, I have made a great many researches, and knew all that could be known concerning the order of *Perseverance* many years before its very existence was known here."—" In fact that is knowing an impossibility—but I should be delighted if you would have the goodness to give me some particulars on the subject."—" With all my heart."

I then took a chair to listen more attentively to so curious a subject; while M. de Rulhiére sat down and began:—" I have made use of an improper term in calling the Count de Palouski the *founder*—but he was certainly the *restorer* of the order, which had fallen into neglect; he revived it, strengthened it by the addition of an immense number of knights, of whom, he, in a certain degree, became the leader. His son, at his death, was thus at the head of this party, and opposed to the king, so that he formed a most powerful league against him; and the king then did what had been done by Henry III., he declared himself chief of the league that menaced him. He made an immense number of new members with all possible speed; the knights of Palouski's party abandoned him, and joined the king's; and all this occured without risk, or raising the slightest noise or bustle, because every thing is mysterious in the proceedings of this order, as the rules declare that all meetings and ceremonies shall be secret, and that the knights shall wear no external symbol of initiation. This stroke of policy was most excellent, and gives me a higher idea of the king of Poland than that commonly entertained; but, the fact is, nobody knows any thing at all about these things. However, Palouski is now alone and proscribed, and one of the insurgents—that is his history."—" It is a very strange one," replied I, " I did not know it, though I was a little acquainted with him: I knew that he

ness for admission was the more flattering to us, as we had neither dancing, music, nor refreshments at our meetings, and that each sitting was terminated by a collection for the poor. When one or more collections amounted to six hundred francs, a knight and a lady were appointed to inquire what poor persons merited assistance, and they were both to go together to ascertain the truth of the reports, so as to determine upon the persons to whom assistance should be given. This produced another beneficial effect, that the knight and lady always gave some assistance of their own to the poor they saw, and whom they had

was at the head of the conspiracy and of the party that arrested the king; but all the details concerning the order of *Perseverance* you have given were absolutely unknown to me."—"It is rather droll that a stranger should teach them to one of the initiated."—"Oh, certainly, very droll! but, at any rate, I still have the advantage of you by knowing the ceremonies."—"Not at all—don't flatter yourself with that fallacious hope: I know that they are very fine, very warlike, and calculated to inspire enthusiasm in troublesome times."—"In a word, nothing can be concealed from the ardour of your enquiries."—"Oh! when a person writes history, particularly modern history, he is forced to make so many minute researches, that he must necessarily discover the most obscure and hidden transactions."

Such was our conversation, of which I have not exaggerated a single word, as I wrote it down at the time to preserve the correctness of all the particulars. What would the *historian* have said if I had told him that I had invented the whole matter from beginning to end, and the order had never existed but in my imagination?—*Souvenirs de Felicie.*

not selected from their own choice ; and besides this they were obliged to write all the particulars of what they did, in a journal set apart for the purpose, with the names and addresses of all the poor to whom alms had been given. At the next meeting, the journal was read aloud, signed and delivered to the president, by whom it was placed amongst our *archives.* Madame de Sabran, now Madame de Boufflers, was one of our ladies, who fulfilled this pious duty with the greatest zeal, kindness, and intelligence. Though we were very difficult in our selections, our number amounted in a few months to ninety. The order would certainly have become an important, useful, and lasting institution, had I not not been forced to leave it amidst its highest reputation, by my journey into Italy, and afterwards by my residence at Belle Chasse. We had several very agreeable private ceremonies, which I do not mention here, as it would take up too much time to enter upon the particulars; amongst these were the initiations of young persons of both sexes, whom we admitted at the age of eleven and twelve, but only as spectators, and without any vote. I am not now speaking of the *initiated,* of whom we had ninety members, as I mentioned before. We had also the ceremony of *the departure of the warriors,* when our military knights set out to join their regiments. The knight's lady was then obliged to promise him a scarf

embroidered with her own hand for the first great action he should perform. In obedience to our laws, I gave this scarf to M. de Rouffignac, who, by a strange accident, had very soon an opportunity of performing a worthy action. On his way to join his regiment, he was travelling close to a wood in a post-chaise, and heard cries of murder. His servant had rode forward, and he was alone, yet he immediately stopped the carriage, drew his sword, and rushed into the wood, in the direction of the cries he had heard, hallooing as if to bring forward his companions. This alarmed the assassins, who betook themselves to flight, and he soon found a man covered with wounds and bathed in blood. He lifted him up in his arms, and carried him to the carriage. He was still alive, but he might die on the road, and M. de Rouffignac thus ran the chance of a terrible criminal prosecution. When he reached the post-house, he took the wounded man out, sent for the nearest surgeon, and made his wounds be dressed in his presence. The poor man made a legal deposition of the facts, and died in half an hour aftarwards. M. de Rouffignac sent me all the testimonials of his adventure, and wrote me to ask for a scarf, which I embroidered with all possible care and dispatch, and sent to him immediately.

Some ridiculous stories have been told of this institution of late years, and even in published memoirs,

so excessively absurd as scarcely to merit the trouble of being refuted. It is said that the queen was highly pleased with the accounts she received of our chivalrous ceremonies, and wished to join the order; that she asked to be admitted, and that we *refused;* now, the fact is, that at one of our meetings somebody said that the queen had spoken highly of the association, and that perhaps it would not be difficult to prevail on her to become the grand mistress of the order. Several persons immediately observed that such an honour would be ruinous to the society, on account of the frequent journeys it would necessarily require; and that, besides, all our freedom would be lost; hence was no step taken to engage the queen's patronage, and nothing more was done. I kept for many years a copy of the rules of the order, which I had written, as I have already mentioned; at Belle Chasse, the Duke of Lauzun pressed me so much one day to lend them to him that I consented; and he afterwards gave them to the Marchioness de Coigny, who obtained my permission to keep them.

It was during the time that I was at the Palais Royal, that the Abbe Raynal published his great work on *The Commerce of Europeans in the East and West Indies.* That work, which had but too many partisans at that time, seemed to me, in every shape, a most monstrous production. I could not

conceive how a priest could have the impudence and the bad taste to insert such licentious anecdotes, disgusting impieties, and seditious sentiments in an historical work; and besides, this bad book seemed to me to be written in a most wretched style, and to contain whole passages eminently ridiculous by their bombast, nonsense and pedantry. We have been pretty well accustomed to such sort of things since; but at that time, in spite of the unintelligible *verbiage* to be found in the works of Diderot, the habit was not yet formed of writing in this extravagant and ridiculous manner. I sometimes went to the sittings of the Academy, and I always found something ridiculous in the discourses I heard; which made M. de Schomberg say that I had the mildest disposition joined to the most satirical judgment he had ever known.

Besides giving up the theatres for the purpose of study, and in order to acquire various accomplishments, I now gave up balls likewise; yet I was fond of dancing, though I renounced it forever, at twenty-five years of age. I could not go to a ball in Paris, without going to the court balls, at least once a fortnight. This required me to spend two nights at Versailles, a great loss of time; so that by giving them up, I gained a great deal. A few years after, I could not conceive how it should appear a sacrifice at all, and I now reap all the advantages of having given them up. All the prudent privations we impose upon our-

selves in youth, that is, during the short space of a very few years, insure us infallible resources, and the most delightful enjoyments, for three-fourths of our lives. Voltaire has said,—

> Qui n'a pas l'esprit de son âge,
> De son âge a tout le malheur.

Yet foresight and precaution are good at every period of life, and in youth can lead to every sort of happiness. It is then so uncommon, so striking, so meritorious!

New discourses and *éloges* of the academicians were continually coming out, but the style of those works in general indicated a faulty school, and that literature was in its decline. M. de Voltaire wrote nothing but bad tragedies; *Les Scythes, Les Guebres Zulime, &c.* Lemierre, the author of several middling tragedies, had given over writing; yet there were beauties in his *Guillaume Tell.* Madame Riccoboni had already written all her novels. M. Gaillard published the only works worthy of notice during this period, after those of M. de Buffon, the *Histoire de François I.* and the *Rivalité de la France et de l'Angleterre,* two excellent works that will always be an honour to this age and to French literature. The author had a great quarrel with the *philosophers,* (his friends at that time,) for having foolishly admitted in his *Rivalité,* that there was certainly something miraculous in the history of the Maid of

Orleans. M. de Buffon also published some descriptions of animals, and invariably with that finished style which he preserved to his latest moment, even amidst the bad style formed by the school of Thomas.

Whilst I was at the Palais Royal, M. de Voltaire came to Paris, where he died. As I had seen him at Ferney, and he left his card at my house, I went to see him three or four times, when he received me with much politeness, but I found him so dejected and broken down, that I saw his end was fast approaching. Some time afterwards, I had rather an intimate acquaintance with M. Gibbon, author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* a work highly praised by our philosophers, because it contains very bad principles, but which is, in fact, a bad book in all respects, extremely diffuse, without novelty of remark, and excessively tiresome. M. de Schomberg was very intimate with M. d'Alembert, and brought him two or three times to my house, and regularly brought me, at M. d'Alembert's desire, all his academical *éloges*, as soon as they were published. A laughable mistake took place with one of these. One day that I was from home, he left me the *éloge* of *La Condamine*, but without the author's name; and as I had no doubt but that it was D'Alembert's, like those I had formerly received, I read it immediately, and was much more highly pleased than with the rest. The same evening I wrote a note to

D'Alembert to thank him for the *éloge*, and added that I thought it infinitely superior to all his former compositions. The next day, M. de Schomberg came to scold me with great severity, and informed me that the *éloge* was written by M. de Condorcet. D'Alembert never pardoned me for having formed an opinion of him so little fitted to soothe his vanity.

The emperor of Germany, brother of the queen of France, came to Paris, and was greatly admired for his politeness, pleasing manners, extensive knowledge of all kinds, and his thirst for increasing it. He was prevented by etiquette from visiting the princes of the blood. I was very desirous of meeting with him, and reckoning that he would very likely wish to see the collection of paintings at the Palais Royal, I engaged the attendant who showed them to strangers to inform me of his arrival. He did so, one day at twelve o'clock; I ran down the stairs immediately, and found the emperor in the gallery; he was fifteen or twenty paces from me, and I walked slowly through the gallery. He asked a question in a low tone of voice from the attendant, and as soon as he learned that I was one of the ladies of honour to the Duchess of Chartres, he came up to me, and entered into conversation with the greatest politeness. I described to him all the paintings, the painters of which I not only knew, but also every anecdote and circumstance connected with them, that is, I could tell through

what various hands they had passed. The emperor seemed to take great interest in the conversation, and continually thanked me for my information: we thus spent two hours. He was an excellent connoisseur in painting, and knew almost all the great masters, without danger of mistake. In person he was good looking, bearing some resemblance to the Prince de Condé, but much younger and handsomer. Next day he had the politeness to leave his card at my house, under his travelling name.

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